Friday, August 8, 2008 ★★ 13 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 244 P18 website: www.inquirer.net

Army scientist who killed self last week was anthrax killer, US says **WORLD** / A28

GMA witnesses signing $150-M deal in China by Mike Defensor's firms **NEWS** / A2

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

FILIPINO DIVER AT THE WATER CUBE Backdropped by the Olympic city's theme in blazing yellow, Raoul Fabriga practices off the 10-meter platform at the National Aquatics Center, better known as the Water Cube, site of the diving and synchronized swimming competitions during the Games.

It's 8-8-08: Giant party begins for China

BEIJING—DOVES FLEW AND confetti rained down as the Olympic torch was carried on the ancient Great Wall on a rainy Thursday, the day before the opening of Games that China hopes will demonstrate its modern-day strength.

Hours before flying to Beijing for today's opening ceremony, however, US President George W. Bush said some of his Mainland language yet in criticizing China on human rights. (See related story below.)

And more than 80 athletes competing in the Games crossed the divide from sports to politics, sending a letter to Chinese President Hu Jintao urging China to solve problems in Tibet peacefully and protect freedom of speech and religion.

In Beijing, excitement is building as the tortuous and troubled torch relay draws to a close and the country's 1.3 billion people prepare for an opening ceremony—a three-hour "spectacular"—likely to highlight China's ancient history and modern face.

The date and time of the ceremony—Aug. 8 at 8 p.m.—is no coincidence or, for many Chinese, it is a particularly auspicious number because it represents prosperity.

"Now is the time for the party," said Meng Chengpu, a 28-year-old

IT'S 8-8-08 / A11

North Cotabato folk told to defend selves

Ultimatum to MILF ends today

By Alcuin Papa, Nikko Dizon, Norman Bordadora, Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Michael Lim Ubac

AS TIME TICKED ON A 24-hour deadline for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to withdraw from occupied areas in North Cotabato, local officials yesterday urged residents to defend themselves and vowed they would not allow them to be "sitting ducks."

The ultimatum ends at 10 a.m. today.

Although defense and security officials denied their ultimatum would mean a declaration of war if the MILF did not comply, 900 members of the Philippine National Police (PNP) were deployed to the region.

An Army brigade also was poised to reinforce the policemen and Gen. Alexander Yano, chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, was dispatched to Cotabato City.

Press Secretary Jesus Dureza said that

NORTH COTABATO / A21

DEADLINE A DECLARATION OF WAR? No, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno (3rd from left) says during a press conference of top security officials at Camp Crame. "We cannot allow these things to happen," he says. Also present are, from left, Presidential Peace Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr., Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro Jr. who describes the situation as "quite delicate" and PNP chief Avelino Razon.

Kalayaan Islands out of baselines bill

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE CHAIR OF THE SENATE FOREIGN relations committee will back the government's position not to include the disputed Scarborough Shoal and Kalayaan Group of Islands in the baselines bill that is being rushed for approval to meet the May 2009 deadline set by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos).

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago announced this yesterday during a hearing of her committee on the baselines bill, where former Solicitor General Estelito Mendoza declared that it would be "absurd" for the Philippines to stake a claim on a territory being claimed by other countries without military or naval firepower to support its stance.

Scarborough and Kalayaan are part of the disputed Spratly chain of islands in the South China Sea which are being claimed wholly or in part by China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines.

Mendoza was invited by the Senate as a resource person, being the last surviving member of the Philippine delegation to the Unclos.

KALAYAAN / A6

Olympics cleanup hides real Beijing

By Anika Chang
The Associated Press writer

BEIJING—IT ALL BEGAN WHEN my colleague Steve's favorite noodle lady was forced to close down. Soon after, the ice pop lady was gone, followed by the scary fruit guy.

Then, a few weeks ago, the shabby apartment complex across the street from mine was covered up with a 3-meter-high sheet metal fence. The barrier blocks a row of small shops on the ground floor that offer every

OLYMPICS / A23

Bush slams China over rights record

BANGKOK—US PRESIDENT George W. Bush used some of his strongest language to knock China's human rights record in a big speech in neighboring Thailand on the day before Beijing finally unveils its Olympic Games.

Message delivered, mission accomplished. Now bring on the sports.

In a speech in Bangkok just hours before flying to Beijing on Thursday, Bush publicly pressed China to improve its human rights record.

He voiced "firm opposition" to China's detention of dissidents, human rights advocates and religious activists.

"The United States believes the people of China deserve the

BUSH / A23

Capiz broadcaster 4th journalist killed this year; 2 suspects held

By Felipe V. Calleja
Inquirer Visayas

ROXAS CITY—A RADIO BROADCASTer was killed here yesterday after he was shot in the back at 1:15 p.m. while riding a motorcycle on his way home from work.

Police identified the fatality as Mario Roxas, an anchorman of Radio Mindanao Network dyVK.

Roxas was brought to Capiz Emmanuel Hospital where he was declared dead on arrival.

He handled the program "Serbisyung sa Udtu," aired from noon to 1 p.m. daily, which tackles local politics.

Three days before the attack on Roxas, another radio broadcaster, Dennis Cuesta, was shot to General Santos City. He is still fighting for his life in a hospital.

CAPIZ / A20

1st hearing on justices' bribery quick, quiet

By Jovanie Aning and Edson C. Tabalov Jr.

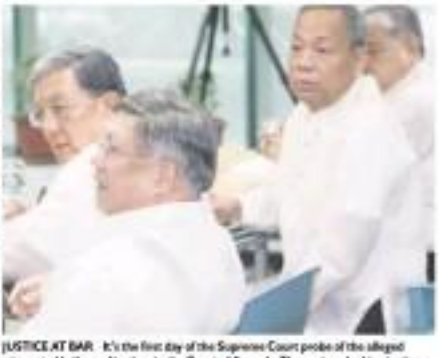
NO SOUND AND FURY MARKED THE first public appearances together of the main protagonists in the controversy rocking the Court of Appeals (CA).

Quick and quiet was yesterday's first public hearing of the three-member panel formed by the Supreme Court to look into the purported improprieties and bribery attempt involving CA justices who had handled a case between Manila Electric Co. and the Government Service Insurance System.

"Bedrai" (roughly, emotionless) was how CA Associate Justice Jose Sabio (who had blown the whistle on a purported P10-million bribe attempt) later described to reporters how he felt upon seeing businessman Francis de Borja (who had denied Sabio's claim).

Indeed, the two men, by their own accounts acquaintances of long standing, did not look at each other and were seated three chairs apart.

1ST HEARING / A21



JUSTICE AT BAR It's the first day of the Supreme Court probe of the alleged attempted bribery of justices in the Court of Appeals. The serious-looking justices from left are Jose Sabio Jr., Presiding Justice Conrado Vasquez Jr., Martin Villarama and Edgardo Cruz.

No passengers, only cargo—DOTC

By Riza T. Olchondra

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTation and Communication yesterday said that two ships of Sulpicio Lines Inc. that were allowed to sail again would carry cargo but not passengers.

Interviewed by the Inquirer on Wednesday, Col. Primo Rivera, Marina deputy administrator for operations, said he signed on Saturday an order allowing the Catalina Princess and the Princess of the Earth to sail again.

He said the order allowing the two vessels to sail had no limitation, which means that both ships can carry passengers.

Also on Wednesday, Sulpicio Lines said the company received from Mari-

NO PASSENGERS / A8

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

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SUERTRES

5 9 6 | 6 4 6

2 7 5

SUPERLOTTO 6/49

6 15 18 31 33 37

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Mining deals inked in China

CHINGDU DEAL. As a prime businessman, Michael Defensor and his counterpart, Zhang Xiaoyan, hold up the Memorandum of Understanding between Nihao Mineral Resources Intl. and Jingxi Non-Ferrous Metals Tungsten Group with President Macapagal-Arroyo and Trade Secretary Peter Favila as witnesses.

GMA witnesses signing of $150-M contract by firms chaired by Mike D

By Lolita B. Salaverria and Amy R. Remo

BEIJING (Via PLDT)—President Macapagal-Arroyo witnessed the signing yesterday of a cooperation agreement between two Philippine companies headed by her former chief of staff, Michael Defensor, and a Chinese firm to explore for nickel and put up a $150-million nickel processing plant in Zambales.

The memorandum of understanding was signed between the publicly listed Nihao Mineral Resources International and Oreophico Phil., chaired by Defensor, and Chinese Jiangxi Non-Ferrous and Rare Metals Tungsten Group Co. based in Changhu, Jiuhoun province.

The President, who arrived in Chengdu early yesterday, is in China with other world leaders to attend the opening ceremonies of the 29th Olympic Games in Beijing today. She arrived here last night.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, Nihao said it had signed the agreement with Jiangxi, one of China's major non-ferrous metals producers, for the exploration and development of their mining holdings in Zambales.

Strategic partnership

Under the agreement, the three companies agreed to form a strategic partnership to jointly explore and develop the Zambales mining holdings covering a total of 25,496.6 hectares, which are either directly or indirectly held by Nihao and Oreophico.

The agreement also provides for other arrangements, including the establishment of a joint venture processing plant for nickel and cobalt in the Philippines.

Defensor said that if the exploration work proves successful, a nickel smelting plant will be put up in Zambales to process the ore mined.

Defensor said the plant would increase the volume of nickel being exported by the Philippines. He said some of the Philippines' low-grade nickel cannot be exported. But with the plant, the nickel can be processed and its quality upgraded so as make them exportable.

Another advantage in having the plant is that it is economic and add value to the country's mined nickel. The Philippines is the country only raw ore. The plant can also process the nickel from other mining area in the province.

Putting up the plant would cost about $150 million. The exploration activities alone would cost at least $5 million. The exploration would be done to check if Zambales has enough reserves to encourage the plant.

Defensor noted that China, which is a very important market for Philippine nickel, has never made investments before in a nickel plant here.

"This will be the first," he said, adding that the project would boost the economy, generate jobs and maximize the resources.

Nihao is a mineral exploration, development and production company focusing on nickel laterite projects. It has been granted rights to explore over 9,000 ha in Sinsuan, Zambales, one of the country's top five nickel-rich regions. Earlier, it signed an agreement with Oreophico to jointly explore and develop the Sinsuan mine holdings.

Oreophico, formerly the La Haven Gold Mining Corp., has to date acquired the exclusive access and acquisition rights over nearly 2,630,000 ha of claims in nickel, gold, copper and chromite in the country.

According to Defensor, the president of Jiangxi is Ferry Angling, a brother of Henry Angling, a special envoy for trade and investments.

Share holders

He said that among the "many, many" shareholders of the two companies are Rene Pano, a brother of Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno; Johnny Go, former president of the Australia-New Zealand Bank in the Philippines; David Chua of the Philippine Stock Exchange; and David Intengan, who Defensor said is not related to Environment Secretary Jim Atienza.

The son of Jiangxi Copper is also interested in exploring for copper in other areas in the country like Agusan del Sur, but is mainly focused on Zambales at the moment.

Also in the presidential party were Speaker Prospero Nograles, Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, Trade and Industry Secretary Peter Favila and former senator Vicente "Tito" Sotto, the newly appointed chief of the Zamboanga Drug Board.

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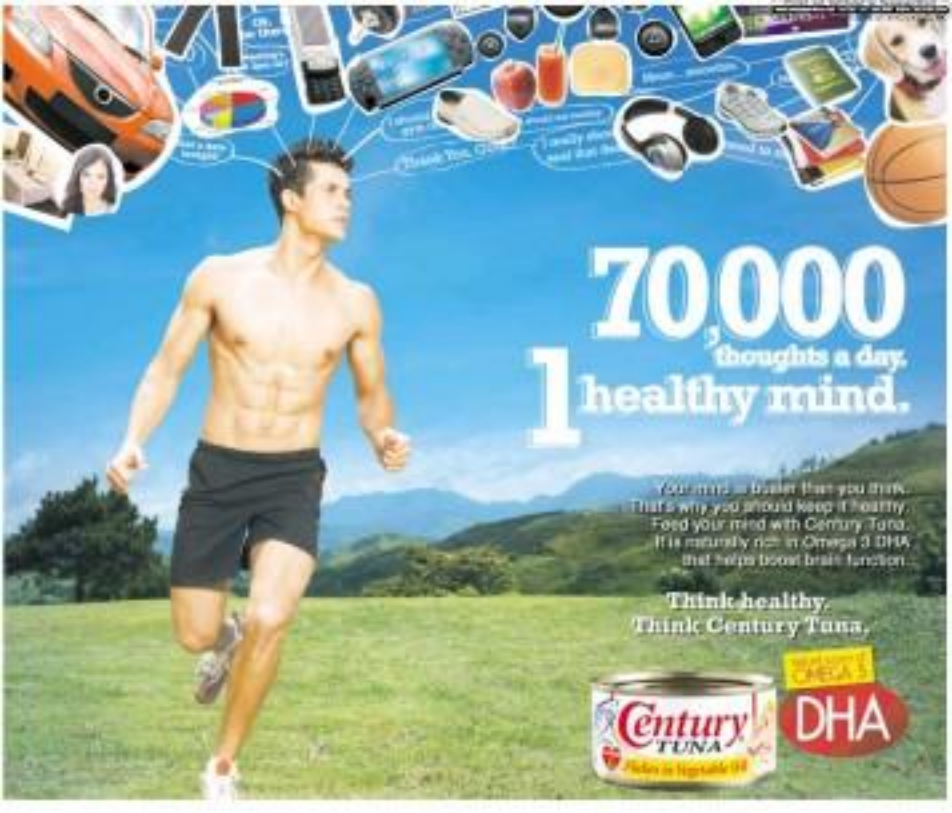

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COA nixes DepEd execs' P15K a day 'extra duty'

By Jerry Esplanada

FOR TAKING PART, HOWEVER briefly, in department-sponsored seminars and training programs, an undisclosed number of Department of Education (DepEd) officials have been charging up to P15,000 a day for what is called an "extra-duty allowance," or EDA.

The EDA, which the Commission on Audit says is not covered by any department guidelines and therefore has no legal basis, has run the agency between P30 million and P50 million, according to DepEd sources.

"Some of the undersecretaries, assistant secretaries and directors sensed an average of four to eight training programs a month where they receive from P30,000 to P15,000 for merely making opening or closing remarks," the sources said.

"To think that delivering a brief speech at during their stints on DepEd-related topics with training participants are part of their official functions," they said.

The DepEd has six undersecretaries and 11 career officer-based directors, among other top department officials.

Suspended

Before leaving for an official trip to Hawaii last week, Education Secretary Jesli A. Lapus said all EDA payments have been suspended as "part of the streamlining operations of the department".

Lapus also directed Yesdaale Sangil Jr., the undersecretary for finance and administration, to come up with EDA guidelines.

Sangil said that, without the guidelines, EDA is "like a wayward bus, a bus without a driver ... like we are all blind."

He said the EDA system was already in place when he joined the department in 2006.

"There's really a need for control mechanisms, like close monitoring of these training programs, reviewing, streamlining and rolling operations," he said.

But he said such programs are necessary to improve the performances and delivery of services by the department.

He said that aside from the nearly 800,000 public school teachers, the department has manned to conduct training programs for a long neglected sector, the non-teaching personnel.

Teachers outraged

Antonio Tinio, chair of the volunteer Alliance of Concerned Teachers, said they were "outraged" that while some DepEd executives help themselves to up to P50 million in unlawful allowances, nearly P700 million in allowances of public school teachers remain unpaid."

Anvil Vesta, president of the National Union of Students of the Philippines, wondered what example the DepEd officials were setting for the Filipino youth.

He said the erring DepEd executives should "retake values orientation with the hope they might regain some of their lost morals."

Elleria Jane Nebia, the accounting division chief, said she can not recall exactly when the practice of collecting EDA started.

Suddenly materialized

"It just suddenly materialized ... There is a circular regarding honorarium, but EDA is different," Jim Pablo said, adding that the DepEd is now working out a system of EDA guidelines.

Jo Rodulgo, the former officer in charge of the department and Lapus' predecessor, recalled having questioned EDA payments when she handed the DepEd.

Rodulgo said agency personnels were limited to only two training programs "should be considered part of their official duties, not outside the workplace."

According to the DepEd sources even if the seminars and training activities were held at the DepEd central office in Pasig, the officials still collected the EDA.

A case in point was the Bureau of Elementary Education's "biotech for the Multigrade Teacher Achievers" held from March 25 to 27, which were ordinary working days, at the DepEd headquarters.

Of the P949,000 allocated for the project, a total of P68,500 was spent on "EDA for management and support staff," according to documents obtained by the Inquirer.

The EDA funding was over big per than the budget for cash awards for the top teacher achievers and eight regional winners (P84,000), trophies and plaques for 35 zonal winners and finalists (P43,100), and per diems of the 14 finalists (P96,480).

Paid no-show

The BEE project, an initiative of BEE Director Yolanda Quijano, was approved by Sangil, education undersecretary Willan Llabrador and the budget division head, Bernardo Rodi.

DepEd sources said some officials collected EDA even if they did not personally show up at the seminar-workshop.

"They still get EDA for simply initiating or being in charge of the activity," the sources said.

The sources did not name names, noting that the "COA people know who we're referring to."

COA officer-in-charge Rhonda Abarcinda declined to be interviewed for this story.

Former military DepEd employees are afflicted with the EDA "virus," according to a department section head, citing as an example "a casual employee here, with a P8,000/month (monthly pay rate) a total of P72,000 to just three weeks for serving as secretariat staff of these activities."

But a DepEd official who requested anonymity said there was nothing illegal in collecting EDA, citing department orders issued by Lapus himself.

He cited Memorandum 66 as the building of the P900 for nonteaching personnel, and Memorandum 70 covering a financial management system seminar-workshop.

Terror suspect with P2-M prize falls

By Nikko Dizon

A SUSPECTED member of the al-Qaida linked Abu Sayyaf terrorist group was arrested early this week by Marine soldiers in Isabela City in Basilan, a military spokesperson said yesterday.

The government has offered a P2-million reward for the arrest of Usman Amri Addasi, said Lt. Col. Edgard Arevalo, spokesperson of the Philippine Navy, in a text message.

Arevalo said the local resident who helped Marine troops in the operation is cracking down Addasi's movements still under the guard.

The fugitive has also filed for custody under the Witness Protection Program of the Department of Justice (DOJ).

Reports showed that Addasi, who has an arrest warrant for kidnapping, was arrested around 2 p.m. on Aug. 4 while buying "personal needs" at a market in downtown Isabela.

He was arrested by intelligence operatives of the 1st Marine Brigade under Col. Rustico Guerrero.

Addasi was "positively identified" by two witnesses as among the followers of slain ASG leader Khadaffy Janjalani and his late brother.

Arevalo said that Addasi "commander" admitted to the charges filed against him.

"Addasi will be turned over to the court for his confession to be made of record after the medical debriefing by the Naval Forces in Western Mindanao," Arevalo said.

Arevalo said that in the last one months, seven ASG members have been killed, captured, or wounded in military pursuit operations.

Oil firms cut fuel prices

By Abigail L. Ho

OIL COMPANIES YESTERDAY REDUCED prices of gasoline by P1 a liter and of diesel and kerosene by 50 centavos a liter as prices of crude in world markets continued to soften.

Independent oil firms were first to reduce prices, with Flying V slashing gasoline prices at noon; Total Philippines Inc. and Unioil Petroleum Philippines Inc. at 2 p.m. and Petron Corporation Corp. at 6 p.m. Total also cut diesel and kerosene prices at 4 p.m. with Unioil and Petron announcing that they would make a similar move at 12:01 a.m. today.

"Unioil is committed to reflecting international prices, thereon lastly as soon as possible," the oil firm said.

The country's three largest oil firms—Petron Corp., Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. and Chevron Philippines Inc.—all implemented price reductions on gasoline, diesel and kerosene at 12:01 a.m. today.

Data from the Department of Energy (DOE) show that the regional benchmark Dubai crude dropped to an average of $$$ 51.12 a barrel as of Aug. 3, from $$$ 51.27 a barrel last month.

The price of unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products went down to $$$ 58.08 a barrel in the Aug. 1-7 period, from $$$ 58.27 a barrel in July.

MOPS-based diesel slipped to an average price of $$$ 44.41 a barrel in the first seven days of the month, from the July average of $$$ 48.05 a barrel.

This price reduction was the second in a month for gasoline, whose price has gone down to a total of P2.30 a liter. Yesterday's adjustments were the first price cut for diesel and kerosene.

Since the start of the year, gasoline prices had risen 19 times, in a total of P7.9 a liter. Diesel and kerosene prices had gone up 21 times to a total of P5.04 a liter.

With yesterday's price slashes, the average pump price of premium unleaded gasoline now stands at between P57.45 and P59.26 a liter, of diesel at between P33.30 and P36 a liter and of kerosene at between P35.80 and P36.75 a liter.

Gov't asked to repossess grazing lands converted to plantations

By TJ Burgonio

FARMERS FROM BUKIDNON YESTERDAY petitioned the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to press for the cancellation of lease agreements on cattle ranches that were actually used as plantations.

The farmers camped outside the DENR office for hours and called Environment Secretary Lito Atienza's attention to vast cattle ranches that had been converted into sugarcane and pineapple plantations by businessmen looking for more profitable ventures.

"Cattle should be grazing on these vast tracts of land, that instead they have been planted to crops," Jesse Inot, spokesperson of the 5,000-strong Mayasa Pakiskisan, said in an interview.

The farmers, holding placards stating their beliefs, charged that the conversion of the ranches into plantations violated the terms of a deal with the DENR. "This is a gross violation of the contracts," Jesse Ye Ferrer, another spokesperson of the group, said.

Atienza was on official leave and could not be reached for comment.

The DENR forged forest land grazing lease agreements (FLGLAs) with businessmen in the provinces, allowing them to use vast tracts of public lands for cattle grazing for 25 years.

Civil case farmers

If it cancels the agreements, the DENR should award the lands to qualified farmer-beneficiaries to boost their productivity, according to Moradin Abdula jan, president of the Alayon sa Banyan Association Inc.

The farmers would file an application for community-based forest management agreements to get the lands awarded to them, he said.

Under this arrangement, the DENR and a people's organization would develop, utilize, manage and conserve a specific portion of a forest land and share the fruits.

"These rich ranch owners have profited more than enough while we didn't even farmers need to labor on the field in order to buy NFA rice and dried fish," Abdula jan said.

The farmers noted that there were at least five ranches converted into plantations in Quezon and Sharing municipalities.

In Quezon, Cesar and Richard Portich, heirs of the clan of former Gov. Carlos Portich, operate a 958-hectare ranch and another one measuring 277 hectares, according to the farmers.

"There are only a few cattle were grazing. Much of the land is planted to sugarcane," the farmers said.

In Sharing, the 850-ha ranch owned by the family of the late Gov. Honorio Ebarya has been turned wholly into a sugarcane plantation with only a few cattle grazing on a small parcel, according to the farmers.

A 456-ha ranch owned by former Dec. Carlos Mayor Felix Simeon was now largely planted with sugarcane. A small portion of it is devoted to raising fighting cocks, they said.

A 472-ha ranch now managed by businessman Alan Uy is now planted with sugarcane even though under its FLGLA, land production was supposed to be limited to only 20 hectares, the farmers claimed.

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Kalayaan Group out of baselines bill

Paragraph #1

"The Scarborough Shoal and the Kalayaan Group of Islands will not be included in the baselines because inclusion within the baselines of any claimed territory is, in international law, not a legitimate method to acquiring territory," Santiago told reporters after the hearing.

"What we will do is, we will not include them inside our baselines. But we will declare them as a regime of islands, which we are allowed to do under the Unclos. We will not lose our claim over these islands whether we enclose them inside the baselines or not. Even outside the baselines is a regime of islands," she said.

Executive session

After Mendoza's testimony, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita requested a meeting behind closed doors, saying the hearing was now delving into matters that could affect national security.

Santiago then moved to convene the hearing in executive session.

The senator told reporters that Mendoza, as the only surviving member of the Philippine delegation to the Unclos, had been ordered to go over the draft of the bill to be made by a technical working group headed by the Office of the President's Commission on Maritime and Ocean Affairs.

"We have agreed that the Philippines must have the deadline by May 2009, that we shall draw our baselines pursuant to the archipelagic doctrine in the Unclos," she said.

Santiago said she did not expect any complication from the passage of the bill because it was based on the same principle in the Unclos.

"It's just a matter of explaining [this] to the [other] senators," she said.

'Without prejudice'

Sen. Benigno Aquino III said he concurred with Santiago's view that the Philippines would not abdicate its claim over part of the Spratlys as long as the Philippine government inserted a "without prejudice" clause in the baselines bill.

"Drawing up the territorial baselines is not a model of acquiring territory," Aquino said. He leaves.

But it appears that Santiago will have to work hard to convince her other colleagues of the wisdom of not including Scarborough and Kalayaan in the baselines bill.

"With all due respect, I am not in favor of excluding the Kalayaan Islands. We have a legitimate claim over [the group of islands], and in exercise our sovereign rights than strengthen our claim," Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan said in a text message.

Said Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr.: "It's time we abandoned our territorial claims and allowed those who disagree with the manner to bring it [to the Unclos]."

Clear definition

A number of senators have sought a clear definition of the Philippines' archipelagic baselines.

In April, Sen. Rodolfo Biazon filed Senate Bill No. 2215 seeking such a definition, after Senators Pimentel, Edgardo Angara and Antonio Trillanes IV.

In March, Trillanes accused the Arroyo administration of sabotaging pending bills in Congress defining Philippine baselines.

He said he was "appalled" at how Malacañang had succeeded in directing the senate of House Bill 3216 to the committee level despite its passage on second reading in December 2007. (See What Went Before.)

The detained marine leader also said his team oversaw the baselines bill, SB 1457, had been "languishing before the committee on foreign affairs for nearly six months."

WHAT WENT BEFORE

Chinese pressure

By Lawrence de Guzman
Inquirer Research

HOUSE BILL NO. 3216 SEEKS to determine the Philippines' archipelagic baselines and proposes that islands in the disputed Spratlys in the South China Sea occupied by other countries including China be enclosed within Philippine territory.

Privately authored by Cebu Rep. Antonio Cuenco, chair of the House committee on foreign affairs, HB 3216 was approved unanimously on second reading on Dec. 13, 2007. Its status has not changed since then.

On March 12, Cuenco disclosed in a news forum that Chinese Charge d'Affaires Gong Bianjun met with him on January 9 (apparently hoping to clarify/explain at the bill's passage on second reading).

Cuenco also said he had received from the Philippine Embassy in China a copy of a communication from the Chinese government dated December 2007, stating: "If the Philippine side forcefully puts Scarborough Shoal and some other Nansha (Spratlys) reefs and islands into the baseline of the Philippine territorial sea, it will not be conducive to stability ... [and will] also disturb China-Philippines cooperation in the area."

JMSU

Leaders of the opposition in the House have linked the delay in the passage of HB 3216 to the joint Marine Seismic Undertaking (JMSU), a controversial agreement signed by the Philippines, China and Vietnam to conduct a joint study in the Spratly Islands.

The signing of the JMSU, on the other hand, has been linked to rumors of exchange deals such as the allegedly over-priced National Broadband Network project with China's ZTE Corp.

Malacañang has denied such rumors, but it reportedly opposed HB 3216 in the belief that the bill would heighten tensions in the region over the Spratlys dispute.

On April 17, House Majority Leader Arthur Defensor called on his colleagues to reiterate their position on HB 3216.

On April 21, the House decided to temporarily freeze action on the bill.

'Terrible precedent'

Said Cuenco in a privilege speech: "To subject its approval at this stage would create a terrible precedent that could cause havoc in the proceedings of the House ... If a solid even land credence to the charge that the House of Representatives caves in to external pressures."

On April 22, members of the House and the Senate also skipped discussions on the measure at the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (Ledac) meeting in Malacañang.

LIKE BORACAY Smooth, powdery sands blanket Pagasa Island, one of several in the disputed Kalayaan Group of Islands also known as the Spratlys.

But Sen. Pena Alan Kiray Ignacio Bunye said those present at the meeting presided over by President Macapagal-Arroyo had agreed to hold a separate Ledac meeting on HB 3216.

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
No. 10, S. 2010

The PHILHEALTH REGIONAL OFFICE VII through the Bids and Awards Committee hereby invites suppliers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following IT Office Equipment:

Lot No.	Particulars	Units	Specifications	Approved Budget
1	Personal Computer - Desktop Type And CPU & Low Cost Set	2 unit 5 unit	Log on to philhealth.gov.ph for details	P1,350,000 P450,000
2	Personal Computer - Laptop	1		P70,000.00
3	Printer - Dot Matrix	1		P15,000.00
4	Printer - Laser Type	1		P15,000.00
5	Scanner - Flatbed	1		P15,000.00
6	Network Attached Storage Device	1		P80,000
7	UPS Power Device Capacity 2 KVA/1KW	6		P60,000
8	Scanner - Flatbed	1		P15,000
9	Web Camera Type	1		P3,000
10	Microphone Type	1		P3,000
11	Speaker Type (Complimentary)	1		P3,000
12	Hard Drive - 2T w/Hot Swappable	1		P15,000
13	Flash Memory Drive	1		P3,000
14	Video Graphic Card - 2G RAM	1		P15,000

Budget for the subject items for this shall be sourced from the internal corporate budget of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation CY 2010.

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

A bidder should submit only one (1) proposal otherwise he/she shall be automatically disqualified. Failure to submit the requirements in the attachment shall make the proposal be delivered on the next business day. If an equipment is pulled-out for repair, a replacement shall be provided if the item is not returned after three (3) working days.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conferences, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the guidelines/provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed below. In case however, the day of the meeting will be declared a non-working holiday, the activity will be done on the next working day.

Activities	Schedule (2010)
1. Issuance of Bidding Documents	August 6 - August 19, 2010
2. Pre-Bid Conference	August 13, 2010
3. Submission and Opening of Bids	August 20, 2010 8:00 a.m. Conference Room, Philhealth Bldg. 2
4. Bid Evaluation	August 20, 2010
5. Post-Qualification	August 20, 2010
6. Notice of Award	September 1, 2010

Bid Documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment to the PHIC cashier of the following non-refundable fees:

Lot No.	Item for Bidding	Bidding Fee
	IT Equipment & Software	P10,000.00

The PHIC will assume no responsibility whatsoever in connection with or relating thereto for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

(Sgd.) MANUEL A. ANCHETA, JR.
BAC Chairman

(PIA) August 6, 2010

Corrections

WRONG MAP

CORRECT MAP

IN THE AUG. 4 ISSUE, a wrong map accompanying the banner story—"SULF: It's a done deal"—mistakenly labeled six areas in Mindanao as Zamboanga del Sur. The ones should have been labeled as Zamboanga Sibugay.

• • •

IN THE AUG. 5 ISSUE, a front page article—"3 acquittals to probe GA bribery case"—misstated the name of a retired Supreme Court Justice. His name is Romeo Callejo Sr.—not Jr.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, August 8, 2008
15th Week in Ordinary Time
Dominic

1st Reading: Mk 2: 1-3; 3:1-5, 6-7
Gospel: Mt 11:28-30

Jesus said to his disciples, "If you want to follow me, deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me. For whoever chooses to save his life will lose it, but the one who loses his life for my sake will find it. What will one gain by winning the whole world if he destroys himself? What is anything you can give in return for your own self?

"Know this: the Son of Man will come in the glory of his father with the holy angels, and he will reward each one according to his deeds. Truly I tell you, there are some here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his Commentary

The ancient baptismal rite of the Church called for the candidate to symbolically turn his back to the world, and to turn to face the Lord as he entered into the baptismal pool. This action powerfully symbolized and made real the solemn decision to follow the Lord wholeheartedly, without looking back, and with no strings attached.

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Christian Communications Foundation, Inc. A Magazine Offering Spiritual Guidance for Every Day. For Publication Info: Rev. Fr. Jose Ma. Cruz, SVD, Editor-in-Chief; Rev. Fr. Jerry Orbos, SVD, Associate Editor; Rev. Fr. Roy Cimagala, Managing Editor; Rev. Fr. Jose Clemente Ma. Arboleda, Associate Editor; Rev. Fr. Jose Ma. Cruz, SVD

Sulpicio asks court to junk P44-M Del Monte suit

By Allison W. Lopez

SULPICIO LINES INC. HAS ASKED THE Manila Regional Trial Court to junk the P44.7-million counterclaim filed by Del Monte Philippines for "lack of merit," accusing the food company of failing to obtain the required dangerous cargo permit.

In an answer to Del Monte's counterclaim submitted on Wednesday, the shipping line said only Del Monte knew of the toxic character of its undeclarable shipment, and apparently glossed over the fact that it did not have a permit to ship the dangerous cargo.

"Del Del Monte obtain the required dangerous cargo permit? Del Monte did not as it has not presented any proof to obtain this permit because it suppressed the toxic character of its shipment," Sulpicio Lines said.

Sulpicio Lines sued Del Monte for P5.3 million for allegedly breaching cargo rules by failing the toxic facets of its pesticide cargo on board the capsized MV Princess of the Stars.

No markings

Del Monte turned the tables on Sulpicio, which supposedly knew that endosulfan was a marine pollutant that should not have been loaded on the passenger ship.

Sulpicio Lines, however, said in its latest reply that endosulfan was used by only two entities—Del Monte and Dole—and that it was the "first time" that endosulfan was shipped on board of the shipping company.

"Del Monte should have made sure all safety procedures and requirements were in place being the user and beneficiary of such highly toxic material," the shipping line said.

Sulpicio Lines added that the all-but containers was containing the chemical did not have markings on its side to show that it was a dangerous item.

Assuming that it did have the alleged procures of a devil and ensued hours, "what is primordial and imperative is the destination and disclosure from the shipper of the toxic character of the cargo," the shipping firm said.

18 civil cases

Meanwhile, two survivors filed damage suits against Sulpicio Lines at the Manila RTC yesterday, along with their families of the victims of the marine tragedy.

Assisted by the Public Attorney's Office, survivors Gerardo Pellazar and Francisco Batalan each asked P800,000 from the shipping company which they blamed for the tragedy that suffered from the sinking of the ship.

The other complainants were Bob Ulat and children Bojane, Ron Joseph and Bejay for victims Josephine Ulat and John Lawrence Ilao; Lolita Tinsay and children Kimberly, Kevin, and Karl for Christopher Tinsay; spouses Bonifacio and Loreta Tolosa for Bonnie Nicole R. and Lilybeth Catenza for Rosevery Cavanan Pena.

The Cebu Regional Trial Court also received three complaints on Wednesday from Gloria Bacolla for Glen Bacolla, Orlando and Anita Ygoran for Ophelia Ygoran, and Evelyn and Luisa Penaloza for Estelle Penaloza Jr.

A total of 18 civil cases have been filed by passengers' kin against Sulpicio Lines since July 16, demanding compensation that now amounts to P118,490,000.

CLARIFICATION
Ships of Sulpicio Lines call again but not loaded with people, only cargo, according to the transportation department on Thursday a day after it reportedly permitted the sailing of passenger ships as confirmed by its owner Marina.

No passengers, only cargo—DOTC

For page A1

as in Sunday an order that lifted the order grounding the two ships.

But yesterday, the DOTC issued statements to the contrary.

"They can't carry passengers, only cargo," said a text message from the Malacañang Palace of the State head, Elena Bautista, a transportation and investment by the maritime affairs.

Bautista said Rivera had denied saying the two ships may carry passengers. She said Rivera was misquoted.

Rivera could not be reached for comment as of press time.

Nelson Morales, safety and quality assurance manager, said he had not personally seen the written order that the two vessels may be allowed to sail again.

Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) Administrator Vicente Bautista, in a phone interview, supported Bautista's declaration, saying that the order lifting the suspension of Sulpicio Lines' MV Princess of the Earth and MV Coralbay Princess was limited to cargo.

"The two vessels were only allowed to carry cargo to keep the movement of goods going. Remember, we have talked to other shipping companies which have assured us they have new ships coming so we're up to create livelihood," Bautista said.

While awaiting the new ships and pending the results of investigations involving Sulpicio Lines, Marina has allowed two of the company's passenger ships to carry only cargo, so that cargo deliveries will not be hampered, the Marina administrator said.

Bautista said the fate of the shipping company's passenger business was yet to be decided by the Marina board.

All passenger vessels of Sulpicio Lines were grounded after the MV Princess of the Stars, the company's flagship, capsized off Sibuyan Island in Romblon on June 21 when it sailed into the eye of Typhoon "Frank."

Only 56 of its ferry's 864 passengers and crew survived. Some 2000 bodies have so far been recovered. The rest have been declared missing or presumed dead.

6 other ships

Sulpicio Lines lawyer Ma. Victoria Limbaco said that the fate of the company's six other passenger ships was not known yet.

Morales said Sulpicio Line's sister passenger vessels had been transferred.

Downpayment

Up next for reinspection are four others which are dry-docked. Seven Sulpicio Lines cargo vessels, which were not screened by the grounding, are still in operation. One is dry-docked.

Almost two months after MV Princess of the Stars capsized, a US firm hired by Sulpicio has yet to start recovering the vessel's toxic cargo.

Titan Salvage, tapped to raise the sunken ship, is still waiting for the downpayment of its $3.5-million contract.

Titan Salvage is supposed to start mobilizing its staff and equipment on Aug. 9.

The firm has received its down payment through a local partner, Titan Salvage, the local partner of Titan Salvage, confirmed receipt of $1.5 million, Bautista said in another text message.

She said the payment consisted of an initial $3.5 million to cash and a letter of credit for $4.5 million.

The payment will be reexamined on Titan's account due to the recent ruling by the Supreme Court affirming its receipt of the payment, Titan will start bringing equipment and people to the Philippines.

"Day 1 of 21 days' mobilization (of 51 tons) starts Aug. 9," Bautista said.

Apart from recovering toxic cargo, Titan has pledged to retrieve human remains that it's crew may encounter during retrieval operations.

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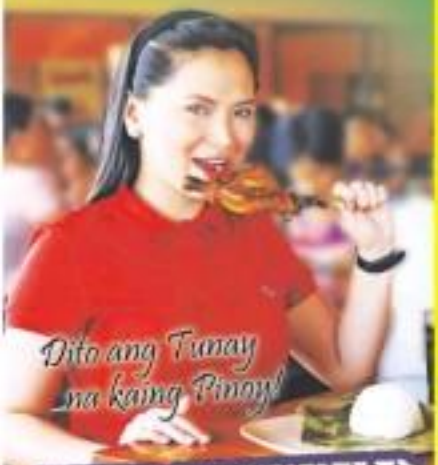

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PORT CALL
THE TRAINING ship Kojima of the Japan Coast Guard docks at Pier 15 of the Manila port for a four-day goodwill visit. The vessel, with 190 crew members and cadets, will conduct maritime drills and exercises with Philippine Coast Guard personnel.

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

No scolding, just last-hour orders from GMA–Cusi

By Cynthia D. Rebera

Cabi

IT WAS NOT A TONGUE-lashing he reserved from the President for ineffective instructions, according to Alfonso Cusi, general manager of the Manila International Airport Authority.

Belying radio reports he was on the receiving end of a tirade by President Macapagal-Arroyo just before she left for China at 6 a.m. yesterday, Cusi said, "It was similar to the President. Hindi kaiba noong Pinoy ako ngayong (Never mind me. She did not lose her temper.) Well, she was a bit emphatic but she was just emphasizing the need to construct more roads leading to the airport."

In a phone interview with the Inquirer, Cusi said the President also was vain but humbled. Jose Miguel Arroyo, also accompanied him to China were weighing how their on that they had just passed by the tunnels on Andrews Avenue in front of the newly opened Naia Terminal 3 and she did not like the condition of the road.

He said the President also asked why the landscaping on the veranda had not been finished.

The landmark, including a sculpture, he said, was still the subject of a "contest" on who would maintain its design.

The project was being handled by the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, he added.

Cusi said the President also ordered all roads leading to the airport spruced up in time for the coming visits of the heads of state of Switzerland and East Timor.

"She insisted that it's no use that nice new road, especially if you're hosting heads of state. She said, 'At least to be done and I want it done immediately.' There was an urgency in what she was saying," said Cusi.

He said the order was not to be addressed to him but to officials of other government agencies involved with the airport.

President Arroyo departed yesterday on Philippine Airlines for Hainan and Beijing on an official visit and to attend the opening of the Olympic Games on Friday. She is due back on Saturday.

Republic of the Philippines
COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS
Manila

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

INVITATION FOR BIDS

GMA urged to push for democratic reforms in Burma

By TJ Burgonio

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo should push for the inclusion of democratic reforms in Burma in a latest dialogue between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, a self-exiled Burmese lawmaker said yesterday.

Khun Myint Tun said the Philippine government should not stop at demanding the release of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, but push for political reforms in the military-ruled Burma.

"Mr. Hu (the President's entourage and statement) to demand only the release of Aung San Suu Kyi is not effective," he said, referring to the President's stay in and Suu Kyi's other national address last week.

"Burma should discuss Burma in a dialogue with China," he said in a briefing, stressing that Asean and China play a key role in restoring democracy in Burma.

"If there's no dialogue, we will challenge the credentials of the BFSC (Burma Peace and Development Council) at the UN. In the States, and especially Philippine government should support us," he added.

Myint Tun, a member of the Parliament Union who was elected was denied a seat in the 1990 national elections, made the appeal as his troops flew to Beijing for bilateral talks with Chinese President Hu Jintao.

Supporters and allies of Suu Kyi are marking today the 20th anniversary of the Aug. 8, 1988 crackdown on pro-democracy students and monks that killed 3,000 in Burma.

Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace laureate, has been held continuously by the ruling military junta since 2003.

The junta, which took power in 1988, called elections in 1990, but refused to recognize the results when Suu Kyi's party won a resounding victory.

SUU KYI

CBCP: Billions better spent on things other than contraceptives

By Kristine L. Alave

AN OFFICIAL OF the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) yesterday assailed the approval by the House committee on health of proposals of the consolidated reproductive health bill.

Fr. Melvin Castro, executive secretary of the CBCP's Commission on Family and Life (CFL), said the supposed measurement to providing a billion-peso budget for artificial contraceptives, which the Catholic Church is vehemently against.

"That congressmen should not spend billions of pesos for contraceptives. They should spend it on education, food and housing programs for the poor," Castro said over the Catholic Church's Radio Veritas.

He also scoffed at the pronouncements of reproductive health bill advocate Rep. Edcel Lagman, who revealed that more legislators had signed on to support the controversial measure.

"We are praying that the congressmen would take back their signatures and realize that the bill is harmful to health and society," said Castro.

He said the Catholic Church would continue to galvanize against the reproductive health bill, which it deems to be "unjust." The Church supports only natural family planning methods.

Lagman said 10 more representatives had signed the bill ... an amalgam of four measures—bringing the total number of supporters to 87.

Lagman, who had tried to have similar bills passed in the past, said this time around the consolidated reproductive health bill would become law.

The Catholic Church recently held a prayer rally attended by some 12,000 followers to denounce the bill.

The Church said the bill, which allows for the wider distribution of contraceptives, mandatory reproductive health education and a national reproductive health policy would erode morality and put the country at a disadvantage "population-wise."

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Tree-cutting for Kanlaon project hit

By TJ Burgonio

AN ENVIRONMENTALISTIC GROUP WILL today appealed to the Philippine National Oil Co.-Energy Development Corp. to stop cutting down trees in Mt. Kanlaon Natural Park pending a court ruling on a petition for a temporary restraining order.

"They should stop cutting the trees while the case is being heard. They can impose a moratorium meantime," Green Watch Philippines chair Gen. Ibarkim told reporters in a briefing.

The farm Mt. Kanlaon Coalition had petitioned the Bacolod Regional Trial Court to stop the PNOC-EDC geothermal project, arguing that the conversion of a protected area into a buffer zone for geothermal exploration was unconstitutional.

According to Green Watch, PNOC-EDC has started cutting down some of the more than 4,000 trees in the park's buffer zone to make way for the geothermal project.

"Dinoal two days ago, a total of 907 trees have been cut and 2.7 kilometers of road have been opened," said Ibarkim. "We're afraid half of the trees would be cut by the time the court hands down its ruling."

PNOC-EDC has been given a permit by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to cut down 4,212 trees on a 12.5-hectare site in the park to make way for roads and other infrastructure.

The 12.5-ha site part of the 169-ha buffer zone, which was allowed to the PNOC-EDC for its geothermal exploration by Republic Act No. 9154, or the Mt. Kanlaon Natural Park Act.

BIR duns Pagcor for P6.8 B in taxes

By Michelle V. Rarro

UNWILLING TO SWEETEN the value-added taxes, the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor) owes the Bureau of Internal Revenue P6.8 billion as of mid-2007.

Of the total, P1.8 billion was for income tax payments and P5 billion for the VAT.

This according to the Bill, which has been engaged in a tax battle with Pagcor the last three years over the gaming firm's tax holidays.

But for part, Pagcor has maintained it is not subject to the 32-percent corporate income tax and the 12-percent VAT under its charter.

Issue before SC

"Since time immemorial, Pagcor has been exempt from their taxes as stated in our charter. We don't know why all of a sudden they want us to pay VAT and income tax," said Ocular King, Pagcor vice president for corporate communications.

But the BIR and its mother agency, the Department of Finance, have insisted Pagcor is no longer exempt from having to pay income and VAT taxes after the Reformed Value-Added Tax Law went into effect in 2005.

The Supreme Court is hearing a case on the issue. Both parties, the DOF-BIR and Pagcor, earlier petitioned the high tribunal to immediately resolve the impasse.

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said a compromise between the DOF-BIR and Pagcor appeared unlikely.

"It is difficult to have a compromise because their positions are too opposed," said Beltran in an interview.

Underdeclaring

In a position paper it submitted to the Senate committee on ways and means, the DOF said Pagcor was not only failing to pay income and VAT taxes, but was underdeclaring its income, on which the 5-percent franchise tax is based.

Pagcor has continued to pay the franchise tax.

The DOF citing records by the National Tax Research Center, said Pagcor declared only 80 percent (P19.4 billion) of its income as taxable in 2006, this from its core gaming operation.

"Nonpaying revenues of Pagcor are not included in the 5-percent franchise tax. The nonpaying revenues refer to Pagcor's share in the winnings of its licensees, from slot machines that are on drobe, bingo, chip washing, internet gaming and licensing of privately operated casinos [that received their franchises from Pagcor]," the DOF said.

The Senate committee opened an inquiry into Pagcor's tax compliance following reports from the BIR and DOF that the national government has been losing huge potential revenue with the nonpayment by the gaming firm of corporate income and VAT taxes.

"Pagcor informed us that it is paid taxes to the national government following the DOF-BIR position, it would no longer be able to remit any cash contributions to President Macapagal-Arroyo's social fund..." the DOF said in the position paper.

The DOF said that, notwithstanding its contributions to the President's fund, Pagcor should still remit its tax obligations.

But Ong said yesterday that making Pagcor pay income and VAT taxes would only move its revenues from one government pocket to another.

He explained that currently 50 percent of Pagcor's income went to the National Treasury, another five percent to the BIR in franchise tax, while the rest went to fund various social services of the government.

He said the only difference that these taxes would make is that the BIR will look good in terms of tax collection.

INQUIRER

OPINION

Undone

THE CEREMONY SCHEDULED IN KUALA LUMPUR for last Tuesday to mark the signing of the controversial Memorandum of Agreement between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front on the ancestral domain issue, was high profile by design. Prestige attainment would have been its attendance, and special guests, including a former peace negotiator of the National Democratic Front and the American ambassador to the Philippines, would have been present too.

EDITORIALS

The signing would have marked the formal resumption of the peace talks, an occasion that seems to justify the guest list. But were more crucially, it would have legally bound the government to a framework privileging MILF claims over constitutional requirements.

No wonder the MILF insists that the MOA is "a done deal."

But the signing ceremony's guest list suggests that the advantages the MOA grants the MILF cannot be the only reason they insist on this view. They must also take some comfort, derive some reassurance, from the government officials they deal with. (Even the unusual presence of US Ambassador Kristie Kenney in Malaysia was a signal, too, of American support not only for the peace process but also for the MOA in written.)

To be sure, the government's official position is that no deal has been struck yet.

"The TRO itself [the temporary restraining order issued by the Supreme Court the day before the signing] tells you that we have not signed it," Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process Hermogenes Esperon told reporters. Rodolfo Garcia, chairman of the government peace panel, added: "We do not deny that there was a meeting of minds on all the contents of the initialed documents. What would consummate the agreement [however] would be the affixing of the signatures during the ceremony."

But this message has been undercut by other statements, especially those belittering the points of agreement reached in the MOA. For instance, the President's spokesman, Jesus Dureza, defended the nature of the meeting of minds. "We're pushing for a breakthrough here. These issues will calm down when they see the bigger picture. We will see there is no cause to be threatened. It's not only for the MILF it's for whole communities in Mindanao. We just have to reassure these openly protesting."

Even more telling, unofficial channels continue to sniff to talk about secret assurances, or discuss preparatory planning for establishing parallel governance departments (such as a separate economic planning agency) in the soon-to-be-expanded Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Indeed, even the controversial conversation between Esperon and North Cotabato Vice Gov. Manny Piñol, in which Esperon allegedly told Piñol not to count on military protection if the petition for a TRO prospered, is itself already remarkable for the allegation's assumption: that the administration was perceived to be "sticking" with the MILF.

Those are signals that the MILF could not have missed.

Undoing

THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO bears final responsibility for the fiasco on the Memorandum of Agreement on ancestral domain. Her vision of expansive but severely followed-the mandate she had given them. But if she wishes to salvage the peace process she has recklessly endangered, she must now distance herself from the MOA, as it is written.

She must first her peace advisers, thereby signal that, for the eminently practical reason that his continued participation in the peace process will erode support for any peace pact from the political classes.

She must reconstitute her negotiating team, placing at its helm a politician of unassailable national stature and filling it with veterans of other peace negotiations.

She must disavow the MOA as it now stands, be publicly instructing the new panel members to renegotiate the agreement on ancestral domain—lowering thereby, this time, to the Constitution.

She must send the Armed Forces' resolve, to protect citizens in case MILF furtives take military action. The only way to prevent trouble from civilians who have taken up arms is to reassure their comrades for taking up arms in the place, by sending in more troops.

Not least, she must rebuild the constituency for peace.

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President bears responsibility for rogue justices

A GROUP OF JOURNALISM STUDENTS ASKED me who between Justice Jose Isidro and Justice Ernesto Francis de Borja is telling the truth and why I have not commented on the bribery scandal in the Court of Appeals. I replied that I do not want to comment on something that I have very little knowledge about and that a three-member commission of retired Supreme Court justices has started investigating the scandal anyway. As to who between Isidro and De Borja is telling the truth, I told them to look closely at the face of the two men and they will have an inkling who is telling the truth and who is lying. "Which of the two would you trust to look after your wife when you are away?" I said.

"Look at the backgrounds of the two," I added when they seemed to be disappointed with my answer. "Who of them has a solid track record and therefore should be more trustworthy?"

There is no doubt that the scandal has again brought down the reputation of the Court of Appeals. The fact that young students are interested and are asking questions is an indication that their faith in our justice system has been shaken. Stories of corruption in the lower courts are rampant, but bribery in the Court of Appeals, the second highest court in the land?

Sometimes the accusations are unfair but at other times they are true. Those at the receiving end of unfair accusations say that this is a normal hazard of the service. Similarly, those losing parties usually say injustice inheres in unfavorable decision is handed down. Most often than not, it will be very hard to prove the bribery precisely because it is done in secrecy. The most practical solution to the problem lies not in catching the corrupt judge or justice but in preventing a corrupt individual from being appointed to the judiciary. The fact that rogue judges and justices abound should be blamed on the appointing power for putting them there. It seems that judicial appointment based on merit are becoming more the exception than the rule.

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

Political patronage is still the primary qualification for judicial appointments, or any presidential appointment for that matter.

The Judicial and Bar Council (JBC), which is charged with the duty of screening nominees for judicial positions, should live up to its duty and the public's expectations by nominating only candidates of unquestionable competence, probity and integrity for judicial positions. The appointing power, on the other hand, should let the JBC do its job and refrain from influencing the nomination process. To the end, whoever gets appointed should be the responsibility of the appointing power.

Because of the increasing scandals involving judges and justices, I think the judiciary needs reforms very badly, no one doing the reforming. Congress cannot do it for it punishes one of its own, sometimes penalizing erring judges with mere slaps on the wrist, or cleaning some of them with stilted arguments. That is hardly conducive to discouraging future wrongdoing. On the contrary, it encourages more of the same. If any government unit must be able to get away with a mere reprimand or a brief suspension.

I think that politicians should be banned from appointments to the judiciary, especially to the appellate courts. A politician has many debts owed to friends and supporters in getting his (and his family's) berths. Many debts are incurred when patrons successfully get him appointed to the judiciary. Judges and justices being only human, gratitude will surely influence their decisions on cases involving some of these patrons. That is not conducive to justice without fear or favor.

And I think retired justices should be banned from appearing to counsels for litigants. Justices, retired or not, carry the reputations of their positions with them wherever they go. They are usually held in awe and with such respect by judges and lawyers that it cannot be helped that their appearance in court as counsel for one of the litigants will exert influence on the decision-making of the judge trying the case. Retired justices already enjoy generous pensions so that they hardly need any "additions" to their meager wages. Enough being they can teach, be they, or write books.

Enormous legal fees from wealthy litigants are a real temptation but ethics should keep the temptation in check. If not, a Supreme Court ruling or a law should put the retired justice in his proper place.

* * *

By the way, going back to the Court of Appeals bribery scandal, businessman Francis de Borja said in his affidavit that it was he who sought Justice Jose Isidro to get some "chismis" on the 2008 Mercedes case which was in Isidro's division. Mahi submitted said ruling to De Borja on the case, but? this unofficial? A judge or justice, or a private individual, is not supposed to talk to anybody about a case pending in his sala he otherwise reasons. Can the two of them be cited for contempt or unofficial conduct for their indiscretion?

* * *

TODAY'S JOKE: A list from the Mahi ulong News Office said this item:

"Official announcement: The government announced today that it is changing its six-month basis to one basis for computing the farmer more accurately reflects the government's political and economic status. A solution allows for inflation, baby production, disease the next generation, protects a bunch of people, and gives you a sense of security while being screwed."

Sellout to MILF, or a set-up for Charter change?

THAT THE PRESIDENT SIGNED MOA-AD [Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain] will have grave consequences with the Philippine Constitution—that much is obvious. Indeed, that is why it can be put into place only when it is approved by the people in a plebiscite.

The next issue is whether our negotiators can agree to submit such proposals to a plebiscite. In effect, they are secretly proposing Charter change, which is allowed by the Constitution. It is the extent that they promised to do so in an agreement, at worst they were grossly misinformed persons, subject to contravention by their principals.

The real problem then is whether we are simply being manoeuvred into revising the Constitution, where the purported object is to engage our Muslim brothers but the hidden agenda is to enable Arroyo to remain in office beyond 2010. Thus seen, the proposed agreement is the clearest maneuver. Charter change, despite several blemishes, couldn't get off the ground and was finally junked by the Supreme Court. Now suddenly it unfolds like cancer of Muslim self-determination in Mindanao and—voila!—the best cause gains new adherents and builds fresh momentum.

The incompatibilities with the Constitution are legion. One, the 1987 Constitution uses the terms "autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao" while the pact uses the term "Bangsamoro by ethnical limits" covering a much larger area. The terms are not synonymous, or worse synonyms.

"Ancestral domain" is the most generous lawyer talk for any legal body vested with rights and powers, of which the most pertinent example is the corporation, wording the term "autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao" is understandable. One, that name is already being used (that's what the ARMM stands for) and it will only confuse people. Two, to say for instance, "Expanded ARMM" might only exacerbate political passions on either of the battlefields. And three, given that the MILF is a rebel group, understandably they would view clear of any implied submission to the Constitution of the enemy.

Passion for Reason

Raul C. Pangalangan

What I wonder about is, now let's say another name but only the Island-wound rounding "Islamic Entity"? The reason, I surmise, is that any other name will not be familiar for either side. "Bangsamoro State"? As if we couldn't even be more hysterical than we are right now as to "excess because president to preside over the dismemberment of the Republic." "Bangsamoro Region"? Well, maybe if it's the MILF's turn to be outraged, as in "My uncle fought in a war, and all he got for me was this T-shirt?"

Two, the agreement, in its credit, uses the concept of "internal domain" to characterize the Bangsamoro people's right to their territory and its resources. Ancestral domain is a fancy term for what international law calls "indigenous peoples" for IPs and what our Constitution calls "indigenous cultural communities." The very first lines of the agreement say that the Bangsamoro people includes "all Moros and all indigenous peoples of Mindanao." So says, Once are persons IPs or indigenous, and they are certainly entitled to their ancestral domains, but Muslim Filipinos might be difficult to call as IPs, unless we classify Islam as an indigenous religion. My guess is that this is the most acceptable and least provocative of concepts. The two features for an entity are: one hand, the "Bangsamoro people right to self-determination" (secondary language for Muslim) and, on the other, the Article 27 nondiscrimination rights of "ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities" (not valid for the MILF unless they are, several cryptic sentences' history of inclusion and disappearance).

Third, the agreement, again rather creative-ly, extends ancestral domain claims to marine zones, and adopts the language of the Law of the Sea. At this point, we sail into stormy waters. Control over internal waters (like lakes and rivers) and the territorial sea (or international law, a band of sea within 12 nautical miles seaward from the coastal) is vested in sovereigns, and one Juridical Entity is starting to appear like a state!

Finally, the Constitution lists only nine items that may be devolved to the autonomous region, and says that any powers not delegated are deemed retained by the national government. Among those reserved powers are foreign relations and finance. Contrast that to the powers of the Juridical Entity "to enter into any economic cooperation and trade relations with foreign countries", "open trade missions in foreign countries", the right to "participate[] in international meetings . . . [as] distinct delegations[] in international meetings . . . [e.g. Asian meetings] and . . . the United Nations", and develop its own "financial and banking" institutions.

I agree with lawyer and peace activist Solomon Santos, who applauded the leader's thrust to Malaysia. "The Malaysian Constitution [provides] federalism, "that constitutional reform is a legitimate enterprise, especially when warring groups talk peace. "To seek constitutional change (e.g., a shift to federalism) has not been usually treated as unconstitutional, except if some other provision is violated (like Martial Law)."

But equally legitimate are our concerns about the basic rules of both sides to the agreement. The pact includes profit-sharing arrangements as the expected windfall from natural resource exploitation. Anybody who knows the track record of both Malaysia and of the ARMM in the able and honest disposition of the public wealth should be frightened. The pact requires constitutional change (deliberately, I venture) and we are rightly uneasy that the genuine and historic grievances of Muslim Filipinos are being used for cheap media-like politics of greed and ambition.

* * *

Comments to passingbyrem@gmail.com

Self-inflicted dismemberment

ANALYSIS

Armando Doronila

THE REMEMBRANCE OF ACHIEVEMENT FORMalizing the expanded Bangsamoro homeland dawdles a map that dismembers the patrimony of the Philippines for the first time in its history.

The map (see the facsimile front page of Aug 6) presents a grotesque territorial truncation of the Republic. It adds to the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) more than one-third of the original area. The MOA seeks to enlarge the area to include the ARMM Dinas, Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Tawi-Tawi, Sulu and Marawi City), six municipalities in Lanao del Norte, hundreds of barangays in the provinces of Sultan Kudarat, Lanao del Norte and North Cotabato, which voted to become part of the ARMM in 2001. It also proposes to include in the Bangsamoro "territorial domain" two municipalities of Palawan, Zamboanga del Norte and Zamboanga Sibugay.

These gross cumcisions the massacred independence Mindanao Island under the jurisdiction of the proposed government of the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity clothed by the MOA with vast powers, including setting up its own security force, the disposition economic resources in its territory, fiscal autonomy, its own system of banking and money, civil service, a bicameral legislative and electoral institutions and its own "basic law."

The MOA is vague (probably on purpose) about whether the "basic law" is separate from the Philippine Constitution or subordinate to the Philippine Constitution. The MOA says only that

LETTERS

Wrapped in lies, the empress was naked

THE PALACE COURTIERS DRESSED THE empress in lies and thus surrounded her with sycophants hoping that her subjects would not be able to see through it all. They also made sure that disgruntled subjects could not come near enough—by putting up formidable fortresses and manned kute bushes.

Only then did the parade go on, with the empress thinking all along that she was dressed in royal raiment. She held her head high, confident and smiling proudly. She was deafened by the loud clapping of hands and cheers from a captive throng. She did not notice the admiring eyes and gasps of her shocked subjects at the sight of their naked empress.

The lie that the empress wore was a claim that there was economic growth in her realm, until a global crisis struck. Nevertheless, her subjects were shielded from the cruel impact, she assured. But the truth is the economy never improved, except for those within her immediate circle. Productivity went down become of graft and corruption. Hunger and unemployment remained widespread, and her credibility dropped to its lowest.

Her invisible clothes were attached with deception. She had nothing to do with the bravery of the young boy who saved lives during a typhoon to rescue strangers she, along with her loved ingdings, left the country for a junket in the United States. The "outreach" text message change has caused me to be merely for show.

To be sure, she can point out to a few, good, ordinary accomplishments. Yet she boasts of them as those by flashing them against to be the rule rather than the exception.

Impropriety and ineptness are basic circumstances for low productivity. The main culprit is still her policy of being liberal with foreign favors, and being stingy with the local ones: the world rather have no imports rather than subsidized rice production, in the empress' hands, nutrition bide rather than sell the truth.

She clings to EVAT for dear life, never mind that it oppresses blind, rarest and tears one of the structural bodies of the poor. She is now saying that without the bonanza from EVAT on electricity, oil and medicine, her government would cease to function. Where does the collection from traditional sources of government go, hands go? The empress diagnosed the "hanin ng EVAT" as though it were her own; no appropriation from Congress, no transparency, no accountability. Given her negative trust rating, who knows where the "hanin ng EVAT" is going?

The empress' contrived expressions of sympathy for the poor and the hard-pressed wretch are ring hollow. If those are real, the economic and educational system would not be in such a mess. What bothers us most are not the lies and deception but the veiled messages to her benefactors, a trip beyond 2010 for her, via Charter change.

When an empress can march through the streets naked, what is she not capable of doing?

—EUTAQUIO OIVES,
ejoves2000@yahoo.com

Convict's superiors not in complaint

THE REPRIEVE TO THE JOHN TEM, "SOLDIER gets life for kidnap of 8 millionaires," December, 7/23/98) it was reported that Agusan del Sur RTC Judge Benito Lim Vitor was convicted Army Cpl. Rodrigo Billones for the abduction and disappearance of the suspected NPA rebels in 2000. We also refer to the decision of the reprieve stating why the judge spared Billones' superiors (Lt. Rodrigo Calubaña and Lt. Ernesto Cabatang, as well as in his conclusion that "something is really wrong with our justice system when only the small fry get the axe while the big fish get away." (Inquirer, 7/23/98)

Obviously, Vitor shied from the top without reading the decision, which even human rights lawyer and private prosecutor John Chua hailed as "a landmark ruling that moved justice, defeating the myth that nothing can be done in cases of involuntary disappearances."

And Vitor's hesitancy to inquire, he would have learned from the decision that the commanding officers could not be convicted because they had not been charged in the information. Only billones was identified by the lone witness, Carolyn Buan, at the time the charge was filed in court in 2001. His superiors were implicated only last year after the defense had rested its case, when Sgt. Benjamin Dumapat testified in court. Dumapat was, until then, indicated in testify after he suffered a stroke; he also feared for his life. This is the reason for Judge Vitor not declaring the accused guilty beyond reasonable doubt. However, the judge drowned at the same time the Department of Justice to conduct a preliminary investigation into the complicity of the two officers and the 14 other enlisted men who were allegedly by Dumapat as having had a hand in the disappearance of the six victims.

May I remind Vitor of the constitutional safeguard which states that "No person shall be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law."

—CATHERINE S. VILLANUEVA,
SLSU, Quezon City

Escudero, as senator, can't be a rabble-rouser

THE SOBERSE EDITORIAL ON SEN. FRANCIS "Chiz" Escudero (Inquirer, 7/23/98) is at best unfortunate. The senator, the only Filipino elective official (among 100 young leaders from private and public sectors all over the world) cited by the World Economic Forum as one of the Young Global Leaders for 2008, does not deserve the unfounded, if not unwittingly malicious, editorial.

The Inquirer chastises Escudero for his statement that President Macapagal-Arroyo should finish her term, which ends in 2010. As an incumbent senator, it would be unbecoming of him to be a rabble-rouser and call for EDSA to step down in for the people to take to the streets and topple the present administration. Neither is the Inquirer nor the influential Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines has done this. Why take it against the senator for not doing something, which neither the Inquirer nor the CBCP will dare do?

In the 2008 Global Outlook of The Economist, its affiliate, the Economist Intelligence Unit, ingores that the Philippines is ranked by world business executives as a high-risk investment destination. The unfortunate ranking puts the Philippines in par only with Sierra, Iraq and other rogue African states. What causes the country's negative rating, among other things, is the perceived political instability. The business's expectation of an opposition senator calling for the pre-termination of GMA's tenure will certainly validate such global perception.

The keynote also chastises the senator for his attention to an anti-GMA campaign theme in 2010 and cautions him against any opportunism on if the senator is beginning running himself as the present dispensation in every issue in 2010. I think the senator does not need a spell the Inquirer now something smarter when there is none. Unlike Barack Obama who gained his popularity by just playing the opposite of his counterpart's presidency, Escudero gained his by raising the bar of political opposition with his adept leadership as three minority floor leader, its opposition leader, then Representative. Escudero stood the Filipino people with his denouncer of "keeping out under pressure." With his relentless search and smart reportorial, he has kept himself more than sufficiently visible sticking to the issues. Unlike most of his older counterparts, he has never raised his voice if only to raise the merit of an argument.

To move to the next level of his public life, Escudero needs to show that the government of GMA (which most political pundits say will be a "lame duck" in 2010) not the puppet of the inept political parties of the administration. Had presidential aspirants, deserving or otherwise, wish that Escudero will be their running mate.—for president, that is.

—FRANK T. GOMEZ,
816 Doña Gerarda Street,
Sahagian/West, Legaspi City

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What study on PVC?

IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT CHEMINFO (AU, obviously on behalf of the plastics industry) to the Philippines, assailed the study on volatile vinyl. ("Stress on PVC curtains based on biased study," Inquirer, 7/23/98). The tactics, strategies and arguments adopted by the to-date or study are the classic used by colossal powerhouses, such as Exxon Mobil, in attacking global warming and by tobacco corporations in defending smoking.

Yet again, we have a dirty industry defending a controversial product that's shown to cause health. Last said, "Decades of research and tax prove that shower curtains made of vinyl (PVC) are safe, effective and deserve their popularity."

What "decades of research" is he damning? Where are this research published and after? Why hasn't this been publicly disclosed?

The truth of the matter is, scientists at U.S. and Danish environmental protection agencies (EPAs) have conducted studies investigating PVC shower curtains. Their research found that PVC shower curtains contain and release harmful chemicals into the air inside our homes.

In 2002 researchers at the U.S. EPA found out that one new vinyl shower curtain can release "elevated indoor air toxic concentrations ... for more than a month" which prompted EPA researchers to recommend that "curtain should be unwrapped when opening the bag of a newly bought shower curtain to minimize the exposure risk."

The chemical industry seems to thus everything to CBI because the 21st Consumer Product Safety Commission's (CPSC) spearheaded the study. But let's not forget that the CPSC is the very same agency that has allowed millions of lead-contaminated children's toys on store shelves in the United States.

Just like mother always said, "It's better to be safe than sorry." And the safe way to go is to choose—by avoiding those potentially toxic shower curtains.

—JOSEPH HENSELL,
chair, Worker Earth Foundation;
member, EcoWaste Coalition's
Mothers Pledge,
Unit 220 Eagle Court Condominium,
36 Retablos St., Quezon City

Across the NATION

'Climate of fear' won't stop polls in ARMM

By Kristine L. Alave

THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS CALLED ON VOTERS IN THE Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao to go out and vote on Aug. 11 amid what some election officials said was a climate of fear brought by the failed signing of an ancestral domain deal between the government and Moro guerrillas waging a separatist war.

Malacañang has declared today (Friday, Aug. 8) and Monday (Aug. 11) as special nonworking holidays in the ARMM and the cities of Cotabato and Isabela, which are enclaves inside the region.

Jose Melo, Comelec chair, said while the elections were a go, the election body was closely monitoring the situation in the wake of reports that the Moro Islamic Liberation Front is occupying several villages in five towns in North Cotabato.

Melo said North Cotabato was now some zones in Magpet (town, where part of ARMM with Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi.

Sharifi Kabunsuan was to be another province in the ARMM until the Supreme Court ruled that its conversion from a municipality to a province was unconstitutional. Voting will be held there, too, however.

"We are fearful that there may be some serious incidents, because this is the border, they [MILF] may attempt or go to Maguindanao. But at most, three or only four towns may be affected, if at all," Melo said.

The Comelec, he said, will proceed with the elections as planned.

He said failure of elections could be declared in areas where the voting, which would not compromised rounding one, would be moved by Comelec.

"But with the AFP were there, they can handle the situation," Melo said.

He said ARMM voters should take part in the elections to "show the rest of the Philippine people how to do it."

The region has at least 1.5 million voters.

James Jimenez, Comelec spokesperson, said the machines were being shipped to at least 2,000 voting centers in the region.

The Comelec, he said, has identified 987 villages in ARMM as election areas of concern and 69 villages as immediate areas of concern.

Comelec field officers and foreign observers reported no violence so far, Jimenez said.

"They believe that the elections will be peaceful, peaceful and they are hopeful that this trend will continue," Jimenez said.

"Since most of the counting centers are located in fairly populated areas, we don't foresee anything major that will happen," he said.

"The weaker reserves is the cluster of four," said Jimenez.

The cluster of four, he added, was brought by anyone of government among an alternative to the MILF to secure the villages as guerrillas were occupying, and also by the failed signing of the memorandum of agreement between the government and the rebels. With Mike Ubac

VANISHING SYMBOLS
A section of native houses in Bonot Village in Buayan, Digos, stand side by side with modern structures. Villagers said these symbols of cultural heritage need immediate restoration.

NEWSBRIEFS

■ CAGAYAN, Tuguegarao

Town offers free shuttle

SFORMER of Gonzaga started offering free shuttle services for students as their way of helping the poor students in going to school.

The town council approved the program, which is now being implemented.

Mayor Esther Nuñez said the shuttle will pick up students from villages at 6:15 a.m. and bring them home from school at 6 p.m.

The shuttle will service the villages of Bolos, Tuao Maritim, Santa Cruz, San Pascual, Pe-ring, Rizal, Bunugan and Buntun.

Ray Gonzales, Inquirer Southern Luzon

■ COTABATO CITY

2 more die of cholera

TWO MORE villagers on Wednesday died in a cholera outbreak in Maguindanao, Cotabato province, raising the death toll there to 20, local officials and health authorities said.

The Philippine National Red Cross reported that 167 others were reported victims by the watery bovine disease.

Red Cross worker Marina Jimenez said most of the victims were Muslim natives who live in villages accessible only on foot, by motorcycles or horses.

Datumbaya Mayor Saiyid Mamintal Adiong pressed fear of more fatalities on count of those infected with the disease live far from the nearest and hours away from barangay health stations.

The Department of Health in Central Mindanao has already sent a team to the area.

Edwin B. Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao

■ CITY OF SAN FERNANDO

300 fire bureau cars are not registered

MORE than 300 vehicles at the fleet of the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) have not been registered with the Land Transportation Office since the bureau was placed under the Department of Interior and Local Government in 1989.

Senator Enrique Limanzan, BFP chief, said 80 percent of the unregistered vehicles are fire trucks. The rest are cars for administrative purposes.

He said most of the unregistered vehicles are in Cebu, Central Luzon and Metro Manila.

"We are correcting the situation and the target date is this year," he said.

About P5 million has been allotted for the registration of the vehicles, he said.

The registration was delayed because documents were lost or misplaced by the defunct Philippine Constabulary-Integrated National Police.

Sandra Aguinaldo, Inquirer Central Luzon

■ CALAMBA CITY

3 dead in collision

THREE persons died in a car collision in Sta. Rosa City in Laguna on Wednesday midnight, police said yesterday.

Senior Insp. Nilgar Rojas Jr., Laguna police director, said a friends car, driven by Raoul Bernardino, collided with a Honda CRV driven by Jonathan Abion's past midnight at the old national highway in Sta Rosa City.

Rojas said Bernardino, 18, a house helper in Sta Rosa City, and her unidentified woman friend on the spot because of severe injuries caused by the collision.

Abion is confined and now continues the Sta. Rosa Community Hospital.

Nelia Catherine Cañaja, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Tau Gamma Phi neophyte dead in hazing rites in Tayabas town

LUCENA CITY—FRATERNITY HAZING HAS again taken another life, that of college student Charlie Dindo Abrecio, 18, after members Rodigerio members of Tau Gamma Phi (TGP) Fraternity, half of them women, beat him to death during initiation rites.

"He was so young. Why did they have him to death in that senseless initiation? That's not brotherhood. They are killers. They killed him," Nindo Abrecio, the victim's mother, told the Inquirer yesterday.

She cursed at her son's fellow fraternity members in the wake of their brutal initiation rites.

Abrecio, a sophomore Marine Technology student at the Batangas University (BU) in Lucena City, was found dead Aug. 2.

His body was wrapped in banana leaves and a blanket in a coconut plantation in Barangay Mate in nearby Tayabas town.

Senior Supt. Rafael Rosales, Quezon police chief, said at least five TGP members and several unidentified men had been charged in court.

"That's not brotherhood. They are killers. They killed him"

"Once the surveillance network spills out the names of the rest of the perpetrators, we will amend the charge sheet to include the others," he said over the phone.

He called on fraternity members to stop hazing as it is against the law.

Under Republic Act No. 8049 (Anti-Hazing Law), if a person dies due to hazing, the officers and members of the fraternity, sorority or organization who took part in the hazing shall be liable as principals and suffer life imprisonment.

Nicole said Quezon Gov. Rafael Nantes, a TGP member, visited the wake Thursday evening.

Nantes said BU officials also visited and offered help. Dr. Ellen T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

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50 THE RAMON MAGSAYSAY AWARD
Years of Inspiring and Changing Asia

THE YEAR 1958 MARKED the first of many years of honoring exceptional men and women with the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award, for their unrelenting and selfless service to their community, country and the Asian region. Recognized by the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, these men and women of Asia are honored because of their "greatness of spirit", an ideal commemorating President Ramon Magsaysay's inspiring leadership.

Now, on its 50th year, the award is considered as Asia's most prestigious prize and the region's highest honor. The Magsaysay awardees work on a wide range of economic, social, and political issues within changing histories of countries of their vastly different Asian environs. But throughout the years, these laureates share one clear and defining characteristic. They have all been, and continue to be, successful builders of what Asia has become today.

Muhammad Yunus, 1984 Ramon Magsaysay Awardee for Community Leadership

Attendees include visionary and political leaders who have led independence movements, established, restored, or strengthened democratic institutions, and reformed large government systems. Some have modernized three post-war economies, preserved and promoted indigenous cultures, and pioneered in setting up basic human services programs in health, education, and social welfare especially for the poor and marginalized.

Contributions of these awardees in the past have shaped Asia's present but more importantly, these contributions signify the key to a better future for governments to come. What lies ahead is being inspired and shaped today by individuals and organizations that challenge poverty and inequality, environmental degradation, and social conflict —issues that need to be resolved to aid Asia's further growth and development.

It is the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation's continuing aim to inspire Asians and people around the globe to do what they can for society, in memory of one man who also inspired many to do the same. The award continues to be relevant and still current, a deep-rooted stirring for bringing positive change to Asia and the world, looking to the future and farsighted by its unwavering faith in the greatness of the human spirit and its capacity to serve the common good.

Aung San Suu Kyi, 1991 Ramon Magsaysay Awardee for Peace and International Understanding

Aung San Suu Kyi, 1991 Ramon Magsaysay Awardee for Peace and International Understanding

Anna Aquino, 2003 Ramon Magsaysay Awardee for Government Service

Park Won Soon, 2000 Ramon Magsaysay Awardee for Public Service

THE ASIA FORUM
Changing Asia: Forging Partnerships, Building Sustainability

2008 MARKS A MAJOR MILESTONE FOR the Ramon Magsaysay Award, Asia's most prestigious prize as it celebrates its 50th anniversary of recognizing individuals and organizations that embody the ideal of "greatness of spirit in selfless service to the peoples of Asia."

Celebrations for the year will be highlighted by an international conference dubbed "The Asia Forum" to be held on August 29 to 30 at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) in Pasay. Changing Asia: Forging Partnerships, Building Sustainability, points out the need for a multi-stakeholder approach within and across societies, to be able to address the immense challenges facing Asia.

Aside from this, the theme also highlights the need for measurable approach in these efforts so that programs are able to address not just issues of today but also the requirements of future generations — for sound equity, sustained protection of rights for promotion of human dignity, and for environmental sustainability.

The Asia Forum aims to bring together Ramon Magsaysay awardees and other distinguished Asian regional leaders to help find solutions to the challenges facing Asia today.

The Asia Forum focuses on three of the most vital areas of panel partnership that deserve the attention of public, civil society and the Asian community at large, which are: Poverty and Inequality: Taking Action to the Next Level; Environmental Partnership and Sustainability; and Cooperation in Diversity and Managing Social Conflict.

A unique and groundbreaking occasion, it is also during the conference that Ramon Magsaysay Award laureates, as a community of respected Asian leaders, will meet for the first time with like-minded leaders from other sectors in a dialogue about the future of Asia.

The Asia Forum counts the first four Ramon Magsaysay laureates and some past chairpersons from eighteen countries among living Asian leaders.

The first contemporary dance company in any Chinese-speaking community, Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan was founded by Magsaysay laureate Lin Hwai-min.

CLOUD GATE DANCE THEATRE OF TAIWAN
Brings "Moon Water" to the Philippines

IN 1973, CHOREOGRAPHER LIN HWAI-MIN, TOOK THE NAME CLOUD GATE —a 5,000 year-old ritual dance that according to legend is the oldest known dance in China— and formed the first contemporary dance company in any Chinese-speaking community.

Since its founding, Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan, with founder and artistic director Hwai-min at the helm, has received numerous local and international citations. It enjoys high acclaim and enormous popularity at home, giving performances at a number of venues ranging from the Jiavik National Theater in Taipei, to well as touring many festivals overseas in cities like New York, Sydney and Berlin.

Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan founder and artistic director, Lin Hwai-min

Cloud Gate's performances are rooted in Asian myths, folklore and aesthetics mixed with contemporary and universal perspectives. Its company of two dozen dancers is trained in Tai Chi, Tao Yin (an ancient form of Chi Kung), meditation, martial arts, Chinese Opera movement, modern dance, ballet and calligraphy.

Lin Hwai-min's choreography has revolutionized Asian dance with its mature and distinct Chinese style of movement. A two-time winner of the National Award for Arts in Taiwan and 1999 Ramon Magsaysay Award laureate Lin has fused dance techniques and theatrical concepts from both sides of the world.

This year the highly-acclaimed Cloud Gate Dance Theater of Taiwan will be giving its first-ever performance in Manila of "MOON WATER" at the Cultural Center of the Philippines on August 30 and 31 to mark the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation's 50th year.

CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES

August 29-30	The Asia Forum Changing Asia: Forging Partnerships, Building Sustainability
August 30 & 31 (CCP)	Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan performs "MOON WATER"
August 31 (CCP)	2008 Ramon Magsaysay Award Presentation Ceremonies

2008 MAGSAYSAY AWARDEES' LECTURE SERIES

August 28	3:00 PM - 5:00 PM
September 1	1:00 PM - 3:00 PM 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM
September 2	9:00 AM - 11:00 AM 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM
September 3	9:00 AM - 11:00 AM

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14th worker dies at Hanjin shipyard in Subic

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT — Another worker at the shipyard of the Korean firm Hanjin Heavy Industries & Construction Philippines, died on Wednesday when he fell from a roof of a building being constructed there.

Arvy Mabitasi, 19, who was employed by Hanjin subcontractor Rodalph Inc., was the 14th worker to die from accidents at the shipyard since 2005, according to records from the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority.

Perseng Jong-yo, Hanjin general manager, said the latest death at the 585-hectare shipyard has made the firm's officials "so disappointed to the point that the situation drives us speechless."

"It happened again in spite of our double and strict measures being implemented after the last incidents as a means of controlling the cause of accidents," Yu said.

He said Mabitasi was "well-oriented, equipped with safety harness such as safety belt and helmet."

"However, while he was working on the roof of Shelter B-1 facing reconstructed middle foundry in Dry Dock No. 5, with safety belt hooked on the lifeline, his helmet somehow fell and landed on the roof. Unmindful about potential danger, he unhooked his safety belt from the lifeline and he tried to get back his safety belt but must have slipped on the roof, causing him to fall," Yu said on Thursday.

ABSFI Administrator Armand Arreza said Mabitasi's death could be attributed to "human error" and not related to the non-compliance of the Korean shipyard to safety standards.

Yet findings suggest that the worker's fall fell because of the wind. He went after it, after removing his lifeline, and that's why he fell off the roof," said Arreza.

Yu said it was not raining when Mabitasi fell from the roof at about 1 p.m. Wednesday.

The roof was 20 meters from the ground, which is made of concrete, he said.

Yu reported that "many hands well still, including (those from) Rodalph."

"The management is not and will never witness the occurrence of similar incidents," he said.

Arreza said Rodalph has been suspended pending an investigation.

Rodalph has been involved in three other fatal accidents, it was learned.

The first victim employed by Rodalph fell from the roof of an assembly shop on Feb. 22 last year, the second, from a 6-meter high structure on March 11 this year, and the third died in a ridiculous accident on June 11.

The ABSFI gave Rodalph manager Suk Ho-kang 72 hours to explain why the company's certificate of registration should not be revoked.

Arreza said the ISSMA was also studying the permanent cancellation of Rodalph's accreditation.

After the ISSMA issued a more and detail order on Hanjin's construction site in June over the death of another worker, the company formed three safety patrol teams, Yu said. *Ruben Romaquia and Nonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon*

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo was guest at the recent launching of the ship MV Angelina at the Hanjin Shipyard in Subic.

'Smart trading' lowers power rates in Baguio

BAGUIO CITY — INCREASES IN oil prices may have raised prices of basic commodities, but the city's power rates dropped by 80 centavos per kilowatt hour (KWH) this month.

That's because the city's electricity cooperative has started trading for cheap power at the wholesale electricity spot market (WESM), the bureau learned.

The WESM works like the Philippine Stock Exchange and allows power distributors to select how and where it can buy electricity, when demand is low and power is more affordable. It is one of the deregulation features of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (Epira).

Smart trading

Gerardo Serrano, general manager of the Benguet Electric Cooperative, said smart trading at WESM proves that it is one way of reducing power rates in the provinces.

The Department of Energy (DOE) has been disturbed by high rates in the provinces because many rural electric cooperatives have breached the 14 percent cap on system loss which is the permissible level that consumers could be made to absorb, said Irma Exconde, DOE assistant director for Epira management division.

Top DOE officials on Wednesday held a public consultation here on its proposed 2008 to 2030 Philippine Energy Plan.

System losses are charged on consumers and are often caused by poor distribution equipment or by inefficient distribution systems, according to the DOE.

But increases in oil prices between April and July have also influenced power rates because 60 percent of the fuel used by some power generation companies or run their operations still comes from imported crude oil, DOE officials said here.

Bond required

Rates are slashed to say WESM to pull down its rates, although WESM has not been answering many power distributors because of a P12-million bond due its administration's require from participants, said Marie Goyao, a member of Benaco's newly formed team of WESM traders.

Like the stock market, playing WESM is also "risky business," he said.

"It takes enormous risk. We try to forecast how the prices would rise or fall...," he said.

The power rates change any day because of what DOE calls "off-peak" moments.

PGSO's Wi-Fi

"Sometimes we gamble wrong and buy power that is too expensive so we try to trade later to compensate," Goyao said.

WESM players were traded power worth P3 per KWh here during an off-peak period, only to discover that the National Power Corp. would have lower the rate further to P1.80 per KWh, he said.

Goyao said he use electricity sold over at P800 a MWh, and was surprised when some power generators practically gave away electricity. Vincent Cabreza, *Inquirer Northern Luzon*

Mayor appears shaven, declares debris gone

By David Israel Sinap
Inquirer Visayas

ILIILI CITY — MAYOR JERRY Trobas of this city spent almost an hour and two since Duches to shave off his beard, the first time he did so in six weeks.

On Shaving his beard reporters with his freshly-shaven face.

Trobas earlier vowed not to shave his beard until all the debris left by Typhoon "Frank" are removed from the city's streets.

He shaved his beard over the weekend. Trobas revealed.

Iloilo City is slowly recuperating from the effects of Typhoon Frank that devastated most of Western Visayas on June 21.

Frank inflicted the most economic damage on Iloilo and Aklan provinces.

Trobas was attending a seminar in Morocco when the typhoon lashed Iloilo. He cut short his trip and returned to a devastated city.

His home in Manchester District was not spared as most of his belongings, vehicles and home appliances were damaged as low due to the flood.

"The city is almost clean," the mayor declared.

There are still areas that need cleaning "but only a few," said Trobas, who also heads the country's league of city mayors.

His had supervised cleaning operations in Jaro and Mandurriao, two of the city's districts that suffered heavy damages as a result of floods at the height of the typhoon.

The city government has already terminated the services of casual employees that is hired to remove mud and other debris from the city's streets, buildings, markets, houses, schools and business establishments.

Trobas said personnel of the Office of Public Services will remain the ongoing cleanup.

He also acknowledged the assistance provided by the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) in the cleanup operations. Note that MMDA is still in the city, unclogging its drainage systems, Trobas said.

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional/Field Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s:

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National/Citizenship	Position
EICHONG (HK) CO. LTD. #22 Sta. Elena St., San Nicolas, Manila	Zenyang Shi Chinese	Director Manager
PHILIPPINE CULTURAL EDUCATION, INC. 1253 Arellano Street Quiapo Ave., Sandy, Manila	Huaxin Zhu Chinese	Assistant Language Teacher
ENG THOMSON (PHILIPPINES) CORPORATION 2nd Avalon Ave. PEA Center 2241 Ayala Ave., Makati City	Qingxia Mao Chinese	Research Analyst Assistant
PRIVATE (NEBC) PHILS. INC. 1012 R. Hechi St., Pandog, Makati City	Ming Feng Lan Taiwanese	Manager
EICHONG (HK) CO. LTD. #22 Sta. Elena St., San Nicolas, Manila	Hongchao Shi Chinese	Import/Export Manager
SAHASOLE POWER CORPORATION 7th Floor Ayala Center Tower 1 - 6811 Ayala Ave., Makati City	Shuqi Cui Japanese	Technical Consultant
CONNECTOR INC. 2/F Yuchengco Tower RCBC Plaza, 6819 Ayala Ave., Makati City	Mingxiao Shen Chinese	Technical Staff
CONNECTOR INC. 2/F Yuchengco Tower RCBC Plaza, 6819 Ayala Ave., Makati City	Jinshan Chen Chinese	Technical Staff
CONNECTOR INC. 2/F Yuchengco Tower RCBC Plaza, 6819 Ayala Ave., Makati City	Huaxi Cai Chinese	Technical Staff
SOUTH WEST LEARNING CENTER, INC. Apay-I Brgy., Municipal Boulevard, Park, Apalit Gateway, Mandaluyong City	Hua Chu Korean	Teacher
EICHONG (HK) CO. LTD. #22 Sta. Elena St., San Nicolas, Manila	Dongbao Zhang Chinese	Marketing Manager
FIRSTOPTION LEARNING INC. 2/F GTM Bldg., Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Cheng Ping Huang Taiwanese	Managing Director
SYNERGISTIC TOURS & TRAVEL CORP. 1/F Pangkat Ltd. (CBA), Brgy. Kasikat Road, Quezon City	Hanjohn Lee Korean	Marketing Officer
KOREA AIR BOARD GLOBE MANUFACTURING CORPORATION 139 Gil-Am, Manok, Manila	Sang Tae Park Korean	Production Director
KOREA AIR BOARD GLOBE MANUFACTURING CORPORATION 139 Gil-Am, Manok, Manila	Sang Hwan Lee Korean	Administrative Asst. Manager
KOREA AIR BOARD GLOBE MANUFACTURING CORPORATION 139 Gil-Am, Manok, Manila	Seung Il Kim Korean	Treasurer
KOREA AIR BOARD GLOBE MANUFACTURING CORPORATION 139 Gil-Am, Manok, Manila	Dongyeol Kwak Korean	Design Manager
INFOCARE SYSTEMS INC. No. 301 S.ED. Plaza 2 Building Orient Tower, 1301 Ayala Blvd., Ermita, Manila	Zhijie Peng Chinese	Software Engineer
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e-MIT, INC. 2/F Pacific Star Bldg., Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Ext. for Village, Makati City	Isaac H. Coley American	Operations Manager

If you have any information/objection to the above mentioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

RAYMUNDO G. ACUÑARAY
DC, Regional Director

First journalist murdered in Capiz

By Nestor P Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—SLAIN BROADCASTER Martin Roxas, auditor of the Capiz chapter of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), was the first journalist to be murdered in Capiz, NUJP-Capiz chair John Heredia said in a telephone interview.

"We are shocked and enraged at this cowardly attack against our colleague and friend," Heredia said.

Chief Supt. Isagani Cuevas, Western Visayas police director, said he had created a task force headed by Senior Supt. Josephus Arapan, Capiz police chief, to investigate the killing.

"We want an explanation why radio broadcasters and media personnel are being killed in this region," Cuevas said.

Heredia said Martin had told his colleagues and coemployees that he was beaten up by a group of young men last week. He said the NUJP was still documenting if this was related to Roxas' shooting.

Impunity

"The killing of Martin Roxas just three days after the wounding of Fernando Gerona in General Santos City highlights the continued threats against journalists and the problem of impunity that has allowed the killers of journalists to go one free," NUJP secretary general Rowena Carranza Paraan said the bayans in Iloilo City.

"We condemn this latest attack against the media and we demand that the police and other law enforcement agencies solve this crime by arresting the suspects and masterminds and putting them behind bars," she said.

"How can we claim that there is press freedom in this country when journalists continue to be killed in broad daylight just minutes after they leave their station?" Paraan said.

Capiz broadcaster 4th journalist killed this year; 2 suspects held

From page A1

The attacks come more than a month after gunmen shot and killed Bert Sison, a reporter for a community newspaper in Quezon province. Sison's daughter, who is also a journalist, was wounded in the attack.

Roxas is the fourth journalist to be killed in the Philippines this year.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists and French group Reporters Without Borders have branded the Philippines the second most dangerous place for working journalists outside Iraq.

Three journalists were killed in the Philippines last year, while 13 were killed in 2004.

On way home

Roxas was on his way home after his radio program when he was shot by one of two men riding a motorcycle.

"He (Roxas) was aboard a motorcycle, and was just 500 meters away from the station when a gunman shot him in the back of the neck," HSM radio station manager Fly Ahern said.

Roxas, who left behind a wife and two children aged 3 and 1, had been a radio commentator for over a decade.

Political squabble

Ahern said there was an apparent attempt on Roxas' life recently, when he was locked from his motorcycle. Roxas dismissed the incident, but had been taking precautions.

Police said it was possible Roxas could have been attacked because of his work.

"This could be a logical conclusion as an ongoing political squabble involving two politicians," Ahern said without elaborating.

Witnesses said the assailants, each wearing a helmet, followed Roxas from the radio station. When the assailants overtook Roxas, one of them shot him, hitting him in the back.

The bullet exited through the victim's breast.

After the shooting, the killer's turned back and fled, according to Chief Insp. Leo Medina, Roxas City police commander.

But policemen on a patrol car between Roxas City and Ivisan town saw two men on a motorcycle who fit the description of the two assailants, Bartles said.

The policemen pursued the two men who were fleeing toward Ivisan.

Arrested at checkpoint

Police arrested the two men at about 2 p.m. at a checkpoint set up by the Ivisan town police in Barangay Poblacion North.

Police identified the suspects as Jestrel Lucatuorno, 27, of Barangay Cogon, Roxas City, and Christian Tria, 25, of Barangay Quirido, Sitanon, Capiz.

Lucatuorno is facing a drug pushing case and has a pending warrant of arrest, Bartles said.

The arrests were made based on the description of witnesses that one of the killers had blond hair and that both suspects were in their 20s, slim and were about 5'7" tall.

Lucatuorno and Tria were on a motorcycle that had no license plate when arrested. Witnesses said the motorcycle used by Roxas' assailants did not have a license plate.

The suspects were detained at the Ivisan police station.

P50,000 reward

In General Santos City, Mayor Pedro Acharon Jr. has offered a P50,000 reward for anybody who could lead to the arrest of the suspects in the shooting of Cuesta.

Acharon made the pledge as a press conference on Wednesday. He said the reward may be small but added it could help in tracing the identities of the suspects.

Cuesta is still in coma despite the removal of the slug from his skull and a bullet from his stomach.

A bullet also shattered Cuesta's left arm.

Oliola, the broadcaster's wife, said she was happy the police were doing everything to resolve the case.

Task Force 211

In Manila, the Department of Justice-led interagency Task Force 211, formed to curb political killings, yesterday said it was extending "full legal assistance" to the family of Cuesta.

Task Force 211 head, Justice Undersecretary Ricardo Blancaflor, said the unit would spare no effort to ensure that Cuesta's assailants are quickly arrested and brought to justice.

The task force was created by President Macapagal-Arroyo to look into and help in the resolution of extrajudicial killings, including those involving journalists.

In a statement, the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas (KBP) strongly condemned the attacks on Roxas and Cuesta.

Within 72 hours

"This latest round of violence against the news media is even more reprehensible when we consider that both incidents have taken place within less than 72 hours of each other," KBP said.

The group said Roxas was the second broadcaster to be killed this year, bringing to 46 the number of broadcasters, out of 54 journalists, killed in the line of duty since 1986.

"The impunity with which journalists continue to be killed is alarming and has become a national shame. We ask the government to do everything in its power to end this disgrace and grave threat to our democracy," it added. With reports from AFP, Ellen S. Aguirre, Inquirer Mindanao and Jerome Aning in Manila

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MILF: Normal troop positioning during wars

By Nikko Dizon

THERE'S NOTHING TO WITHdraw, or the occupation is just "normal positioning."

Ghazmali Jaafar, vice chair on political affairs of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, yesterday said that the MILF fighters engaging mostly Buddhist-converting villagers in North Cotabato since July 1 were "local MILF."

"We don't have anything to withdraw," Jaafar said, referring to the government's appeal for the MILF leadership to order its troops to leave the occupied barangays.

Ed Kalbido, MILF civil-military affairs chief, denied that there was occupation of the five towns as claimed by the Philippine government, but his story differed from Jaafar's.

"There are MILF guerrillas positioned in some villages of Aleosan and Midsayap towns but that there is no permanent occupation. Just part of normal strategy on troop positioning during wars," he said.

"Those they are claiming to have occupied the lands have long been there. That is not occupation because they have been there for a long time," Jaafar said. "I doubt if there are new ones there."

Jaafar told reporters by telephone from his Mindanao base that the MILF leadership is determined to "unpartial investigation" into the alleged incidents.

If MILF fighters are found to have "positioned" themselves "in areas where they should not be," Jaafar said they would be asked to leave.

"We will comply. We respect the ceasefire agreement as we have been cooperating in everybody," he said.

Kalbido also said that the MILF would ask the international community to intervene in North Cotabato.

He said then the Organization of Islamic Conferences had established a growing presence in Mindanao and could help resolve the impasse.

Kalbido also said the positioning of MILF troops in the villages of Bulol in Midsayap and Pagangan in Aleosan was only where signing on Tuesday was temporarily called off following the Supreme Court's intervention at the behest of North Cotabato officials.

"This is not what the JOE is all about," he said. Kalbido, who said that they would be properly explained to the right time.

Militias started it all

"We do not understand why North Cotabato officials are including that they will be forcibly taken under the JOE. That's why there is the provision on protocols so that their people can decide," he said.

Jaafar maintained that the MILF leadership failed to counter Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said that President Macapagal-Arroyo issued orders before she left to attend the opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games in Beijing on Friday to order the withdrawal in North Cotabato.

"Right now, there's no need to issue any orders," Ermita said. "But we go by the assumption that we need to be prepared in case (MILF) splinter groups are chaos."

Ermita said that if the MILF leadership failed to counter Ebrahim's orders from the area, the police and the military would take "appropriate action as it is necessary" to quell such the rebels.

"I don't think violation of law can be tolerated for purposes of avoiding conflict during this time," Ermita said.

Already serious before TRO

He explained the situation became "critical" a week ago before the Supreme Court issued a temporary restraining order on the Memorandum of Understanding and not allowing on Aug. 15.

Because of a loss of confidence, they were worried that the MILF might take advantage of the situation and put back the rightful owners of these lands," Ermita said. "This is not a declaration of war, this is a normal enforcement of the rule of law."

Ermita expressed hope that the Joint government-MILF committee for the recording of hostilities could resolve the issue. "Our troops will defend themselves if fired upon. But we are hoping the peace process holds true," he said.

"Let us not allow the animosity created by this previous event but let us work together to resolve whatever differences we have through dialogue," Kalbido said.

Councilor concentrates

Kalbido said that the joint committee on cessation of hostilities is presently in debate the detailed on Midsayap and Aleosan.

He said that MILF forces did not start hostilities.

"The stabilization in three areas harassed MILF troops in nearby villages and that clashed all of these areas," he said. With reports from Ruth Mendoza, Edwin O. Fernandez and Grace Castol-Alhesin, Inquirer Mindanao

North Cotabato folk told to defend selves

From page A1

n "weighted calibrated police action" supported by military elements had been authorized.

The 24-hour deadline was announced during the Camp Crame press conference attended by Pano, Ermita, PNP Director Gen. Arturo Lomibao and Presidential Peace Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. This followed a meeting on Wednesday night of the National Security Council which directed Esperon to inform the MILF of the government move.

'Forcibly separated from area'

"What is not the answer to our problems. Government is now taking the steps only, perhaps this can be resolved peacefully, but government will do what is possible," Pano said.

"We are giving them (rebels) only 24 hours to vacate unless they will be forcibly be separated from the area," Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno told a news conference at Camp Crame with top defense and security officials. "We cannot allow these things to happen."

Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. urged the MILF leadership to compel its fighters to accept the ceasefire.

"This is a time for all of the good faith and responsibility in an organization," he said.

800-strong MILF force

Puno said an 800-strong MILF force led by Commander Umbra Kato, who had defied MILF leaders in the past, had forced more than 6,000 people in 1,500 families in five their homes in Midsayap and Aleosan towns.

The occupied villages were Bulol, Ilomavis, Pagangan, Pagayawan, and Datalig in Aleosan; Sunsapa in Libungan; central and upper Labas, Patadalig, Lagunde-ingan, Kangahon and Bulol in Midsayap. Liliyaqui in Pigkawayan, and Gayonga in Northern Kabacan town.

Puno said that the PNP had been receiving reports of the MILF taking villages since July 1, burning houses, destroying plantations, looting property and stealing cattle.

Fight with knives, slingshots

Around 400 armed members of civilian volunteers organization Citizen's Watch under the control of local executives, mostly Christians, were preparing counteroffensive, Puno said and warned that the PNP would disarm them.

"I would like to remind our local executives that CAFGU are not authorized to carry firearms without specific authority," Puno said.

In the House of Representatives, Rep. Bernardo Pilot Jr. of North Cotabato said at a news conference that the MILF was sending reinforcements to the occupied villages.

"The encourage our people in the area to defend themselves," said Pilot, brother of North Cotabato Vice Gov. Emmanuel Pilot who has called Ebrahim's attention to the MILF activity in his town. "We cannot close these eyes to kill our people like sitting ducks."

Troop deployment late

In the Senate, the congressman's brother said in a news briefing arranged by Sen. Rita Bonus that he did not care if his people were armed with slingshots and knives.

"We have to stand up. It's not the weapon in your hand that matters, it's the courage in your heart and the principles that you stand for. One bronco might be burned, we might be attacked. But we have to fight for our homes and our children," Bonus added.

The vice governor said that the announced deployment of troops was "a bit late."

Thought it was a close deal

"It is an admission that indeed, their (MILF) plan that much has progressed to the problems of North Cotabato for so long," Emmanuel Pilot said. "Our military-spending government must defend the territories at all cost or else we will be allowing the dismemberment of our country."

The latest flare-up of violence in Mindanao comes at a delicate moment in efforts to resolve four decades of a fifteen separate war that has left more than 120,000 people dead and

2 million displaced.

The government and the MILF on Tuesday were set to sign a memorandum of agreement (MOA) on ancestral domain, following 10 years of off-and-on negotiations, but the Supreme Court stopped the ceremony after local Ilihakanon officials protested the inclusion of their areas in a supposed Moro homeland without consultations.

Critics said that the broad economic and political powers accorded a proposed Bangsamoro Juridical Entity with its own security force spearheaded by 12,000 MILF fighters amounted to the creation of an independent state.

The MILF said that the court action was a problem of the Philippines and that as far as the MILF was concerned the MOA was a "done deal"—a position repeated by Malacañang officials who said that the accord was ready to be signed, only awaiting law and approval in a plebiscite.

North Cotabato Gov. Jesus Sacdalan said that the MILF fighters who had occupied the villages want debate by "non-combatants."

"They already want the lands divided because they think the MOA has already been signed," Sacdalan said.

To enforce rule of law

"We are announcing these operations in order to enforce the situation and put back the rightful owners of these lands," Esperon said. "This is not a declaration of war, this is a normal enforcement of the rule of law."

Esperon expressed hope that the joint government-MILF committee for the recording of hostilities could resolve the issue. "Our troops will defend themselves if fired upon. But we are hoping the peace process holds true," he said.

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GMA: Monitor situation

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said that President Macapagal-Arroyo issued orders before she left to attend the opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games in Beijing on Friday to monitor the situation in North Cotabato.

"Right now, there's no need to issue any orders," Ermita said. "But we go by the assumption that we need to be prepared in case (MILF) splinter groups are chaos."

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1st hearing on justices' bribery quick, quiet

From page A1

The hearing that began at about 9:15 a.m. was over in 30 minutes.

Subic, De Borja and seven others in CA justices sat with their backs to the gallery as they listened to the testimony of the panel consisting of retired Supreme Court Associate Justices Cardozo Gelbolingo, Abelardo Ruth Romero and Bonnie Cellejo Sr.

The others summoned by the committee were CA Presiding Justice Conrado Vasquez and Associate Justices Mariano del Castillo, Vicente Roxas, Myra Fernandez-Tidal, Apolinario Bruselas Jr., Martin Villarama Jr. and Edgardo Cruz.

Where they sat

The seating arrangement of yesterday's hearing indicated the contending camps and their varying positions on the issue.

Vasquez, who had voted to exclude in the controversy over what's decision should take on the Morales vs. CSBS case but ended up ordering the matter to the Supreme Court, sat near the middle of the table.

On Vasquez's left were Villarama and Cruz, who had been consulted by the leading Subic and Reyes on who should have jurisdiction over the case.

At the extreme left sat De Borja.

On Vasquez's right sat Subic and then Tidal, the acting chair and for most members, respectively, of the 9th Division that issued the earlier temporary restraining order favoring Morales, and who had both protested their being excluded from the case.

On their right sat Reyes and Roxas, regular chair and member, respectively, of the 9th Division that issued the July 24 decision favoring Morales.

Reyes was the poorest, or with or without the decision.

Also present as committee documents against Subic et al. to submit their affidavits not later than 4 p.m. yesterday. He said the affidavits would serve as direct testimony, thus abbreviating the proceedings.

Cellco instructed Subic et al. to furnish one another copies of their affidavits so that anyone feeling aggrieved could respond.

He warned that only statements of facts, and not conclusions and leanings, may be included in the affidavits.

No lawyers for justices

Subic, Vasquez, Tidal and Villarama are to take the witness stand at today's hearing.

Being all lawyers, the CA justices commissioned will not be represented by legal counsel, the panel said.

The panel is expecting a speedy hearing today, with Cellco declaring that no motion for postponement would be granted and that a final report containing findings and recommendations would be issued "not later than Aug. 23."

According to Aquino, the witnesses are allowed to attach to their affidavits as many documents—letters, court issuances, sworn statements of supporting witnesses, etc.—as they wish.

"Whatever you believe will support your allegations or additionally support your affidavit, attach it," she said.

To further speed up proceedings, official documents may be photocopied. The authenticity of the papers may also be certified by the witnesses before the panel or determined upon comparison with the records of the case in ruling Morales's efforts to seize a takeover by the CSBS.

'Kawawa naman siya'

De Borja, who had earlier described himself as a friend of Morales's close friend Lourdes, arrived about 10 minutes earlier than Subic.

Asked later by reporters how he felt seeing De Borja, Subic said: "Kawawa."

"I could not help commiserate for this morning, my daughter is the United States called me up and told she was praying for him (De Borja). Kawawa naman siya (He's pitiful). He was the one who brought this upon himself."

Subic had earlier told Cellco during Justice Vasquez that because "breaking for Morales" had allowed him P10 million to exhibit himself from the case in which the power utility sought the voiding of the Securities and Exchange Commission order stopping Meralco from including power costs in its May 27 board decision.

Perlas alluded to, De Borja had come forward and denied making such an offer to Subic.

In an affidavit, he had also said Subic claimed to have been offered by the government cash and a seat in the Supreme Court "to leave the GSIS position," and that when he asked what it would take for Subic to retain the purported offer, the latter answered: "P1 million."

Subic had promptly denied De Borja's claims.

Surprise testimony

Asked again how he felt when he saw his fellow CA justices, including Reyes, with whom he had had a falling out, Subic said: "Wala (Indifferent)."

"I can't help but feel a measure of pity about the P10-million affair right after he injected it, including Fr. Joaquin Bernas, the constitutionalist and law dean, and also his and his daughter's relatives.

He also said he would ask Bernas if the latter could draft an affidavit, "because I think as a priest, how can he deny that we discussed [the latter offer] in the Jesuits' lounge [at Ateneo Law School]?"

What they said

At the beginning of the hearing, each justice and Subic introduced themselves to the panel.

Subic, Tidal and Villarama raised points of clarification.

Toward the end, a number of the justices asked technical questions, including to whom they would submit their affidavits, and how Subic, who lives in Baguio, would be furnished his copies.

Subic asked for more time to submit their affidavits to the clerk of court of the Supreme Court in the appellate court, from where Bruselas could pick up his own copies.

It also indicated that it may summon Evelyn Cayosa, a friend of both Subic and De Borja's.

It was Subic who had earlier presented an affidavit from Cayosa stating that De Borja had asked her for the justice's phone number so he could contact the latter regarding possible inhibition from the Morales vs CSBS case.

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Wait for conclusion

Aquino requested reporters to "refrain from speculating" yesterday in the hearings, but admitted that the panel was not running a gag order on the proceedings.

She said the media should wait for the conclusion of the hearing before publishing or airing comments on the evidence and testimony offered by the panel.

"It's the panel's duty to come out with the conclusions," Aquino said.

Explaining the panel's direction to reporters, Supreme Court spokesperson Atty. Midas Marquez said it was a semi-extension of the earlier oral hearing.

"The committee is just telling the media to be very careful because there are charges and counter-charges, accusations and counter-accusations," Marquez said.

He said the directive was made "so that the media will not prejudge the issues and so that the general public will not make its own conclusions before the [investigation] is over."

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Pinoys proud of their athletes, says poll

By Kate Pedroso
Inquirer Research

THE PHILIPPINES may not have won a single gold medal since the Olympics were first played more than a hundred years ago, but an overwhelming number of Filipinos believe it is "very important" for the country to compete in the Beijing Games, a survey showed.

Seven percent said it was "not very important" while 2 percent said it was "somewhat important."

Seven percent said it was "not very important" while 2 percent said it was "not at all important."

In Metro Manila, 76 percent of the respondents said it was very important for the Philippines to compete for medals in Beijing.

Many might perceive hold the same views in the rest of Luzon outside Metro Manila, 63 percent in the Visayas and 62 percent in Mindanao.

The same view was expressed by 74 percent of respondents from Classes ABC, 68 percent from Class D and 66 percent from Class E.

"The more the effect of sports on pride, the more the importance given to competing in the Olympics," SWS noted.

The survey was conducted from March 30 to April 2 using face-to-face interviews with randomly selected 1,200 adults distributed into samples of 300 each in Metro Manila, the rest of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. It had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Pride everywhere

About three in every four (74 percent) of the respondents said they were "very proud" when asked how proud they were whenever the Philippines did well in international competitions, while another 19 percent said they were "somewhat proud."

Five 5 percent said they were not very proud, while 2 percent said they were not proud at all.

Majority of Filipinos across all areas and socioeconomic classes were very proud of the country's international sports achievements—82 percent in Metro Manila, 77 percent in Luzon outside Metro Manila, 69 percent in Mindanao and 67 percent in the Visayas.

The same sentiment can be seen in 61 percent of respondents from Class ABC, 76 percent from Class D and 75 percent from Class E.

Top sports associations

Of the respondents who said they were "very proud" of the country's accomplishments in international sports, 78 percent said it was the urge to compete in the Olympics.

The importance of competing in the Olympics was lower among those who were only "somewhat proud" (46 percent) and "not very/not at all proud" (39 percent).

The sports survey found that among member-associations of the Philippine Olympic Committee, Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines (ABAP), Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas and Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines were the three cited as "doing well in promoting sports."

Respondents were shown a list of all 38 associations of the Philippine Olympic Committee and were asked to name up to three associations they thought were "doing very well" in promoting and supporting Philippine sports.

Twenty-seven percent mentioned the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines, 26 percent cited the ABAP-founding Basketball Association of the Philippines, while 18 percent mentioned the Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines.

Eleven were to three (3.4 percent) had no answers, while 3 percent answered "none."

Others cited, too

Other associations cited by 2 to 4 percent of respondents included the Philippine Karatedo Federation (4 percent); Gymnastics Association of the Philippines (4 percent); Philippine Football Federation (3 percent); National Golf Association of the Philippines (3 percent); Philippine Tennis Association (3 percent); National Archery Association of the Philippines (2 percent); Philippine Volleyball Federation (2 percent); Philippine Federation of Bodybuilders Inc. (2 percent); and Philippine Dragon Boat Federation (2 percent).

Other associations which received fewer mentions were the Philippine Softball Association of the Philippines (1 percent); Table Tennis Association of the Philippines (1 percent); Philippine Amateur Judo Association (1 percent); Philippine National Shooting Association (1 percent); Integrated Cycling Federations of the Philippines (1 percent); Philippine Amateur Swimmers Association (1 percent); Philippine Amateur Sepak Takraw Association (1 percent); Philippine Laro Bouth Association (1 percent); Wrestling Association of the Philippines (1 percent); Amateur Soft Tennis Association (0.5 percent); Amateur Rowing Association of the Philippines (0.4 percent); Philippine Sailing Association (0.3 percent); Philippine Canoe-Kayak Federation (0.3 percent); Philippine Weightlifting Association (0.3 percent); Equestrian Association of the Philippines (0.3 percent); and Wushu Federation of the Philippines (0.1 percent).

It's 8-8-08: Giant party begins for China with 3-hr spectacular

From page A1

explosive scorching the night sky as he made his way to the Great Wall.

"This shows how much the Chinese love the Olympics," he said, gesturing at thousands of yellow-clad volunteers dancing and waving flags as far as the eye could see.

Fireworks music blasted out from loud speakers, echoing around the mall, and drums and cymbals thundered out a pounding beat.

"We have travelled to so many cities from Olympia to the Great Wall. We have cried so many times, we have been emotional, especially when you see the reaction of the Chinese crowds," said Xi Anhong Lu, who accompanied the torch relay around the world.

Tickets sold out

Yet China, the Games are an opportunity to show the world how far it has come since the communists came to power in 1949 following a brutal civil war, and particularly the past three decades of phenomenal economic development.

The Olympics offer a promise of hastening an historic renewal showing China's social as well as economic transformation, similar to the 1964 Games for Japan and the 1988 events for South Korea.

Enthusiasm for the Games among the Chinese people has been so strong that tickets have sold out for the first time in Olympic history.

Nevertheless, the run-up of controversies that have swirled around the Olympics continued to bedevil the Chinese leadership, from the smog that has stubbornly hung over Beijing to human rights worries.

More than 100 heads of state and other senior national leaders are expected to attend the Games, including a record 80 political leaders will flow through the event despite the Chinese leaders' repeated efforts to dam the political issues.

However, that is all expected to be at least briefly swept aside during the opening ceremony kicking off today at 8:08.

Better than NBA crown

And opening glow will undoubtedly be the main focus for the 10,000 athletes, with US basketball star Kobe Bryant reflecting those passions as he declared that winning gold in Beijing was more important than an NBA title.

"You're playing for your country, there's more at stake," he said.

Beijing has ramped up security. More than 100,000 security personnel are patrolling Beijing, sci-minute launchers have been set up near the "Bird's Nest" stadium, and the military and police are on the alert for terrorists.

Over the past year, Beijing used emergency measures to improve air quality, a measure of pollution and big again cut visibility across Beijing to a few hundred meters.

The pollution issue has been particularly embarrassing for China because it has highlighted the dark social side of the hard-to-side effects of its historic modernization drive amateur environmental degradation.

Medal tired, Federer prickly

Glowing results celebrated on Wednesday night as China's swimmers won seven more gold in opening match, beating Serbia, 2-1 in Sharjah.

Men's water began on Thursday, with Australia's Grant Hackett helping Brazil win a first gold medal in its first match in Rio Olympics, Brazil capitalized on a 79th minute goal by Ronaldinho to beat Belgium, 1-0, in Group C play.

Tennis starts on Sunday with many hoping for another classic encounter between Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer in the men's singles final. But neither man seems to be in top form.

Nadal said he had had little rest since his five-set victory at Wimbledon on July 6, but he still hoped to win a medal for Spain. "For very few players in the [Olympic] medal round," he told reporters.

Federer was in a prickly mood at a practice session, and then complained on Thursday that constant attention been athletes had forced him to leave the Olympic Village.

"It is intolerable really then are so many athletes asking for photos and so on. It is not ideal to prepare," he said.

Eyes on the skies

Many eyes continue to turn to the skies, with strong and variable winds predicted for the week. The have descended again on Thursday, but authorities, who spent $18 billion trying to cut pollution, said air quality was fairly good.

August is chosen because it's warm in Beijing, and organizers had talked of using experimental technologies to "seed" rain clouds to ensure it stayed dry for Friday's opening.

The highlight of the opening ceremony is the lighting of the Olympic flame, the culmination of a 130-day relay.

Small groups of foreign protesters have also popped up in Beijing in a bid to grab the spotlight.

Pistachios security officials dumped many three Americans Christian activists on Thursday after they attempted to protest for religious freedom in Tiananmen Square.

15,000 performers

Security measures are tied to markets. Some foreign businessmen said they had been told to fill out forms with detailed personal questions, including political affiliation and names of friends.

"It just seems like everyone is terrified ahead of the Olympics that something will happen on their watch and they are overreacting," one businessman told Reuters.

Some 15,000 performers are set to take part in the opening ceremony with 29,000 fireworks due to be released into the night sky.

The ceremony is also expected to see Chinese pop star Lisa Hanna, together with British singer Sarah Brightman, sing a especially commissioned theme song to the soaring "aerials" exercise.

Lotteries rolling, too

The opening ceremony has increasingly become an opportunity for the host nation to say something about its culture.

But in an era of mass audiences, China is acutely aware that it has only been allowed to hold the Games because of its economic success.

Behind the scenes, the country has been ruled by the Communist Party since 1949, which has ruthlessly suppressed any dissent.

Today, Beijing is a city of contrasts. Chinese are increasingly wealthy and free to do what they please, but the ultimate power remains with the party.

Basketball star Yao Ming had been tipped for the honor, but officials remained tight-lipped.

Although gambling is mostly illegal in China, punters have a chance to scoop $750,000 in special lotteries by correctly guessing various numbers like exact date the country's first Games gold.

Ticket holders will have a chance to take up to five million yuan ($720,000) from a two-yuan ticket (29 cents) as the lucky number begin to roll out today according to the news.

Compiled from reports from Reuters and AFP

Bush slams China over rights record, detention of dissidents

From page A1

fundamental liberty that is the natural right of all human being," Bush said in comments likely to anger China's censors.

Stair-free Olympics

"We speak out for a free press, freedom of assembly and labor rights not to antagonize China's leaders, but because standing in people with greater freedom is the only way for China to develop its full potential," he said.

Beijing is accused of cracking down on dissent ahead of the Games instead of granting more freedoms, as originally promised.

Analysts said Bush's speech, which also praised Beijing's regional leadership and cautions social reforms, was carefully structured and timed to try to satisfy critics at home while reassuring China's tentative choice for a stern free Olympics.

N. Korea also slammed

In a wide-ranging speech billed as an Asia policy statement, Bush touched on everything from North Korea's nuclear program, to regional security and trans-Pacific trade.

China responded tersely, but signaled it considered the matter over.

Foreign ministry spokesperson Qin Gang said: China firmly opposed "any words or acts that to endorse to allow countries' internal affairs, using human rights and religion and other issues."

"Chinese government puts people first, and is dedicated to maintaining and promoting its citizens' basic rights and freedom. Chinese citizens have freedom of religion. There are indispensable facts," Qin said in a statement posted on the ministry's website.

Bush had faced criticism from rights groups not only for attending the Games but also for not speaking out more forcibly against Beijing's crackdown in the run-up to the showpiece event.

He has clashed often on human rights before, focusing especially on restrictions on religious freedom, and drew the Chinese government's ire by meeting dissidents at the White House ahead of his trailblazing farewell trip to East Asia.

Bush made it clear in Seoul on Wednesday that he had no intention of using the Olympics as a platform for berating China on human rights, though he intends to discuss such matters privately with President Hu Jintao.

Wake up

While acknowledging China's growing economic clout, he also said Beijing should wake up to the wider responsibilities that that entails.

"We are making clear to China that being a global economic leader carries with it the duty to act responsibly on matters from energy to the environment to development to places like Africa," he said.

Another focus of Bush's visit to Thailand is neighboring Burma (Myanmar), which is under heavy US sanctions to try to bring an end to 46 years of military rule.

"The American people care deeply about the people of Burma and dream for the day the people will be free," he told diplomats and former political prisoners at an Bangkok lunch.

Reports from AP and Reuters

Olympics cleanup hides real Beijing, its beauty full of contradictions

From page A1

thing from handmade Chinese bread to bicycle repairs.

The Beijing that visitors and television viewers see during the Olympics isn't my Beijing.

It's unnaturally sanitized and oddly soiled, with roads of in between ugliness and earthy charm giving way to modern apartments who want to have a fabulous every.

Since I moved here from the United States 36 months ago, I've found the beauty of Beijing to be that it's full of contradictions and doesn't try too hard to please.

Migrants sent home

It's an ancient capital that's constantly being rebuilt. It's the cultural heart of China, yet also home to hip-hop clubs packed with kids swilling cold green tea mixed with whiskey. In the shops, tony fashion district where I live, you can find Communist hotlines, home-grown rock and dickens pushing the sidewalk.

That's the real Beijing, in Olympic hiding, half the cars have been taken off the roads and many migrant workers and students have been sent home to reduce pollution and congestion. Much of the city seems eerily quiet, much like the feeling you get driving around an American town on Christmas morning.

Almost all construction has been halted. Building sites where machinery pounded and banged 24 hours a day in the lead-up to the Olympics are quiet. I used to count nearly 30 construction cranes from my apartment window; now I only see six.

The restrictions have taken pains to hide as many of the unfinished buildings as they can. The concrete skeletons are draped with giant sheets decorated with pictures of Olympic athletes or flower scenes.

A drawback on Wangfujing, Beijing's busiest pedestrian mall, it is covered with a drape painted to look like a finished building.

Taxi drivers have been issued uniforms and are now among the youngest-looking drivers in the world, with navy trousers, button-yellow shirts and striped ties. Before us, visitors here wouldn't normally swallow a ride driver with an office worker.

And then there's Steve's noodle lady.

Sidewalk dining banned

The food stalls that crowded many side streets have been ordered closed and a lot of sidewalk dining has been banned, because they're considered unsightly or unsanitary. Meanwhile, the menus at proper restaurants now have officially approved English translations. So items "the temple explodes the chicken cube" (kung pao chicken) or "fried orange" (or, curry).

The noodle lady and her cart behind the boarded-up Front Building Hotel used to have pride for weeks. For just three years, almost 40 years, you get cold, spaghetti-like noodles mixed with shreds of cucumber and bits of chili sauce, served with sesame paste, soy sauce, vinegar, chili oil, plenty of garlic and a special sauce.

Steve Wade, our sports writer, ate two servings every day, slurping his noodles from a big soup bowl. "Hey, if it were as good as Steve says it is, it must be something really good, I wouldn't eat just one bowl," he told me. They really were that tasty.

Though I had been writing about the coming Olympics for half a year, it seemed intangible and far away—until Steve's noodle lady stopped making noodles. Then the Olympics were for real.

'Only for face'

"Next month, we'll be back in two months," said a man filling it for the to-pay lady was otherwise a fruit stand. We shuddered a soul of one man and fifty-cent bills in his hand, reserving one that to sell snowmen-shaped ice treats bars in schoolkids.

We, meanwhile, give his first name, lashed out at the governments for what he said was its obsession with looking good for foreigners.

"When other countries host the Olympic Games, they do it to make money, but look at China, it's only for face," he said.

We, but since left for his hometown of Chengde, northeast of Beijing. Also gone is the lady beak guy who peddled small piles of apples, peaches and slices of pineapple at night from the back of a bicycle cart in the parking lot of my apartment complex.

"Hey!" he'd signal as I was leaving passes by, "Feelin' like wanna buy some fruit?"

Behind the fence

Many people are waiting for the Olympics to be over, so life can return to normal. The more unsightly are finding ways to survive.

This week, a coworker ripped me off in a woman who was secretly selling fruit from behind a huge Olympics sign.

And life goes on behind the sheet metal fence blocking the Soviet-built apartment complex across from mine. A chop-house has hung red lanterns and a Chinese flag around a little opening left in the fence so customers can get in. Her cold drink cases are back outside along with the crates of peaches. But her other wares, the material girls, somehow has to hang the "sex shop" sign over the door, and last week she was giving someone a ride on a bicycle.

Whatever unpredictability Beijing is still alive, after all, just behind the fence. That made me feel better.

Mishler's note: Chang has been living in Beijing for more than a year. This is her account of what one changes are the city as it prepares to host the Olympics. From around the world for the Olympics.)

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Laguna Lake's illegal fish pens face demolition

LLDA contractors clash with town execs

By Beverly T. Malindog

THE LAGUNA LAKE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (LLDA) and the municipal government of Binangonan, Rizal are feuding over the demolition of illegal fish pens and fish cages along the banks of the Laguna Lake.

LLDA contractors complained yesterday that they were threatened by Binangonan Mayor Cecilio Ynares regarding their plan to demolish the illegal fishpens.

The town official reportedly said any contractor that would dismantle the structures would be arrested.

Agapito Bedia, a contractor of Barangay Nayon, Cardona, Rizal province, said some local government officials threatened to confiscate his boat if he proceeded with the demolition.

Ynares denied any such threats. "I do not know the basis of these reports. I have not talked to any LLDA employee nor to any of their contractors," said Ynares, uncle of Rizal Gov. Casimiro Ynares III.

LLDA General Manager Edgardo Manda told the Inquirer yesterday that, despite the reported "intimidation," they would go ahead with the demolition today on Talim Island in Binangonan.

Manda said it was unfortunate that they were facing opposition from local officials when the demolition was meant to clear unregistered lands in case issued on the lake.

"We are just implementing the mere according to our mandate. The lake is not intended and some structures are illegal," said Manda.

Only 10 percent of the 90,000 ha lake can be used for fishpens and similar structures. But fish pens now cover about 20 percent of the lake.

The LLDA will send only three boats from a contracted eight last week. Other contractors reportedly backed out because of the alleged threats.

Ynares admitted he opposed recent demolition operations on Talim Island because he felt his constituents were not given due process.

He said he favored the demolition of illegal structures, but added that fish pen owners should be given time to collect their fingerlings and recoup their investments for humanitarian reasons.

"Small fish pen owners are the most affected by this move. I hope they are allowed in August of the fish before the dismantling because they have already spent money putting up these structures," Ynares added.

The LLDA recently resumed demolition operations, dismantling hundreds of fish pens and cages operating illegally on Talim Island.

Manda and Talim are one of the areas with a big concentration of illegal fish pens and cages on Laguna Lake, adding that many of the structures were owned by local officials.

QUAKE DRILL Students cover their heads before they leave the premises of Nasugbu's Central Elementary School in Tanke in an orderly manner during an earthquake drill yesterday

In hot water for parking in motel lot

By John M. Aurelio

GROVE MISCONDUCT charges may be filed against three Pantabangan City prosecutors who allegedly parked a patrol car in front of a Pasay City motel last week.

Investigation Police District director Chief Supt. Jaime Thomas said they recommended the filing of charges against PCI Jojo Salazar, PO1s Wilson Pandacaan and Kevin Vargas after a week-long investigation.

Thomas said the IPD's investigation chief, Supt. Adolfo Santolo, endorsed the filing of charges of grave misconduct under Republic Act 6713 or the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials, as well as Internal Police Discipline Circular 2007-01 against the lawmen.

Hearing

Thomas added that a summary hearing at the National Capital Region Police Office was recommended for Salazar and his companions. The NCRPO will then decide on the case.

A police car in Salazar's name was spotted last week at the parking lot of the Harmonie Lodge motel in Pasay City.

Salazar said he wanted to have the blotter of the patrol car listed and he had left the vehicle in the parking lot because there was no parking space in his house.

Pantabangan City chief of police Supt. Ronald Estilles reportedly earlier fired chief of Intelligence Police Community Precinct 8 and had him reassigned to the administration housing section.

Court orders arrest of David Bunevacz for estafa

By Jeannette I. Andrade

A QUEZON CITY COURT ISSUED an arrest warrant against former Filipino-American dreadlock David Bunevacz for alleged illegal disbursement of funds of a high-end aesthetic clinic.

Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 100 Judge Marie Christine Azcuna set a P120,000 bail for one of three estafa cases filed against Bunevacz by lawyer Atty. Alfredo Ramon Gregorio and Max Stallcup on Ayala Avenue, makati City and an affiliate of the Beverly Hills Surgical Institute in California.

In a counter-affidavit, Bunevacz denied the estafa charge, claiming the officers of the company filed the complaint against him in retaliation for a physical injury was he filed in the National Bureau of Investigation in December.

Bunevacz was a partner in the center and its former president and chief executive officer. He resigned in November last year.

Beverly Hills SPM claimed in its complaint that Bunevacz misused company funds amounting to P850,000. As an ob allegedly issued that the former company executive issued three checks in February, March, and September last year to Blazek Motors for car insurance and for the purchase of a car, a BMW X5 model.

The company represented by board director Tyrone Ong, claimed the disbursements was not related to business operations nor was it approved by the board of directors.

But Bunevacz said he issued the checks according to company procedures and there was nothing irregular in the disbursement.

Apart from the estafa charge, Bunevacz is facing two other similar charges in RTC Branch 101 (Judge Evangeline Castillo-Leaño) and RTC Branch 104 (Judge Thelma Pastoral).

Assistant City Prosecutor Ronald Barbaro filed the charges after Bunevacz reportedly failed to account for the disbursements despite demands from the company.

The failure to account for the P850,000, Azcuna said, was enough basis for charges of misappropriation of funds. Azcuna also Bunevacz was under obligation to return the sum.

Mother dies in accident, but saves son

By Allison W. Lopez

A 30-YEAR-OLD WOMAN DIED in a vehicular accident Wednesday night in Manila, but managed to keep her 10-month-old baby out of harm's way.

Jocelyn Estrada of E. Muñoz Street, San Andres, Malate, died at the Dispital ng Maynila where she was rushed after being run over around 7:30 p.m. by a sports utility car driven by PO2 Reynaldo Dela of the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response (Perc) on Quirino corner Taft Avenues.

Dela was charged yesterday with reckless imprudence resulting to homicide in the City Prosecutor's Office.

Estrada, who suffered fatal injuries after being run over by the right rear wheel of Dela's Toyota Fortuner (EMC 991), managed to get her son Karl William out of the vehicle's path. The boy was only slightly hurt.

Witness Samuel Salonga told traffic investigator SPO3 Mario Jorge that the light had turned green when the victim, who was carrying her child, "hesitated" to cross the street.

"Nagpatawag-tawag po ikasi siya (she was going back and forth)," Jorge quoted Salonga as saying.

The witness said Estrada saved the baby by throwing him before she was hit. The infant rolled on the street, away from the vehicle.

Dela immediately surrendered to authorities.

WATER LILY FESTIVAL IN LAS PIÑAS
Senate President Manny Villar and wife, Las Piñas Rep. Cynthia Villar, ride a banca adorned with water lilies along the Las Piñas Zapote River during the celebration of the third Water Lily Festival in Las Piñas City.

City Hall worker nabbed for posing as lawyer

By Nancy C. Carvajal

A MAKABAN CITY HALL EMployee was arrested and charged yesterday with estafa and usurpation of authority for allegedly impersonating a lawyer and representing in court a person seeking legal assistance.

PO3 Rhea Rios identified the employee as Lenelito Madrazo, 48, of the city's People's Law Enforcement Board (PLEB). Madrazo was charged in the office of the city prosecutor.

PLEB receives complaints, endorses investigations, hearings and decides on citizens' complaints against erring policemen.

Rios said Madrazo's alleged illegal activities were reported to the mayor's complaints action office by his "client" Merlin Carmen Clory, 19, who filed a robbery and attempted rape case against a certain Crisanto de la Cruz in Nueva Ecija.

In her affidavit, the victim said Madrazo introduced himself as a lawyer when she met him last month in City Hall. He promised to help her with her case.

The victim said Madrazo received an anonymous fee of P5,500 so he offered to prepare all documents needed for the case.

Police said Madrazo got more money from the victim as fees but did not provide the services he promised.

"He cannot fulfill his promises because he is not a lawyer," police said. Madrazo also promised the victim he could collect P50,000 from the object of her complaint in settlement, police added.

The victim said she gave an additional P3,000 when Madrazo accompanied her to the province supposedly to get pertinent documents for her court case.

She said she became suspicious when they failed to make a court appearance even after a complaint was supposedly filed in a court in Nueva Ecija.

"He knew did not appear in the roster of members of the integrated Bar of the Philippines," the victim reported.

Police said the suspect did not resist when arrested by members of the MCAT but denied the complainant's allegations.

MetroBriefs

Australian found dead in condo unit

MR AGS FRALIN colonel was found dead Wednesday inside his rented condominium unit at Olympic Heights, Barangay Bagumbayan in Quezon City. Investigators of the Quezon City Police District Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit (QCPD-CIDU) have ruled out foul play in the death of Mark Stephen Murphy, 58, who works for the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs. QCPD-CIDU head Supt. Franklin Moises Mabanag said Murphy, who was last seen alive on Sunday afternoon, could have been dead for three days when he was found. Mabanag added that when Murphy's body was discovered by friends, he was lying on his side on the sofa and showed no signs of external injuries. Prior to the discovery, real estate broker Mary Christine Chan had gone to Murphy's unit to collect the rent. When nobody answered the door, Chan called up the unit's caretaker and owner who used a duplicate key to enter the apartment where he found Murphy on the sofa. Some of the Crime Office personnel recovered assorted maintenance medicine for hypertension on Murphy's dining table, leading police to theorize that the Australian government official could have died of a heart attack.

Jeannette I. Andrade

Reporter loses wallet, fires gun

POLICE are now studying charges of indiscriminate firing against a man who fired his gun in public before dawn Thursday in Montinlupa City, Supt. Alfredo Valdez, chief of police, identified the reporter as John Gilbuena, 42, a Montinlupa City resident and who said he was a reporter for the Manila edition of Tokyo Shimbun, a Japanese newspaper. Confiscated from Gilbuena was a .45 caliber Rexio pistol and a .45 caliber magazine with six bullets. Valdez said the reporter had just alighted from a bus in front of a gasoline station around 12:30 a.m. along the National Road in Barangay Putatan when he noticed that some of his personal effects he retrieved that he could was missing. In an interview, Gilbuena said he borrow and permit to carry was in his wallet, which he said was stolen while he was on the bus. "I found out that my pocket was plundered and my wallet with P5,000 in cash, credit cards, ATM cards and my gun license was missing," he told the reporter. Gilbuena claimed he went to the bus terminal nearby to check if somebody had turned over his wallet to bus employees. Upon leaving the terminal, the reporter said he noticed the man following him. "I had been the victim of many holdup incidents before. That's why I carry a gun," Gilbuena said. "I fired a warning shot, but then the police came by," he said, adding that he was "disoriented." No one was hit or injured during the incident, Valdez added. The Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines, of which Gilbuena is a member, in a statement said in the issuance said it regretted the incident but added it "would not tolerate or condone such irresponsible behavior. However, we ask the police to respect his rights as a citizen and give him fair and equal treatment. This is not a press freedom issue."

John M. Aurelio

Shootout claim under probe

WERE video and batteries how Brad shots and the absence of bullet holes on a taxi allegedly caught in the middle of a crossfire brought hot questions regarding a shootout claims made by policemen who killed one of three men in an armed encounter before dawn yesterday in Quezon City. Residents of Barangay St. Peter in La Loma told reporters that when Mary Grace Quinto drove her taxi (TXI 834) into Sto. Cristo, yesterday, bullets sound like there was an exchange of shots since there was an interval of 15-16 seconds between the first two shots and the last five successive shots. A member of the Scene of the Crime Office who requested anonymity claimed that the position of the body showed that the unidentified slain suspect could have been ready to surrender when he was shot. "A suspect exchanging shots with police officers would not be facing them, he would somehow fall sideways, but the victim did not. He fell straight on his back with both his arms open up—cruz leg meat," the source claimed. The SCPD-CIDU is conducting an investigation to determine if the suspected robber was killed in a legitimate police follow-up operation.

Jeannette I. Andrade

Star City weekend attractions

STAR CITY, the first and only imported roller coaster in the country, and local version wonderland Snow World are two of Star City's stellar attractions that continue to provide fun and excitement for the entire family. The premiere amusement park is open Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 2 p.m. onwards. Group tours and party packages are also available. For inquiries, call 556-0346 or 833-4483.

PROFESSIONAL REGULATION COMMISSION LAUNCHES PRC FAST-ID

Tape TIM Corporation for faster Professional ID Printing System

Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) recently launched "FAST ID", a new service that allows registered professionals to secure their Professional ID after six hours.

"PRC is always looking for ways to improve our service to the public. One year ago, we launched a service that allowed professionals to get their IDs within the day. This year, we tapped the services of TIM Corporation to develop a system to allow us to print Professional IDs a lot faster," says Dr. Leonor Rosano, Chairperson of PRC.

"TIM knows well PRC the mission to deliver excellent services to our country's professionals. Through proven IT solutions and processes, we know we will meet our goals," says Jose Mari Antonio, President and CEO of TIM.

FAST ID is in response to the clamor for faster releasing of Professional IDs. With hundreds of professionals accepting by PRC daily, now we need time for ID production has been a cause for concern.

FAST ID issues Professional ID received. With the new FAST ID system, professionals can simply come to PRC before they go to work and can expect to get their new IDs within a couple of hours.

"We have an ongoing project to have professionals receive their licenses. One of the concerns are professionals have waited about licenses received in the waiting time for their Professional ID. Launching Fast ID is a testament that PRC listens to the needs of the Filipino Professional," added Dr. Milo Rosano, PRC Commissioner.

"We envision a lot of professional OFWs, specifically from the Middle East who come home to the Philippines only to renew their licenses and then fly back to the Middle East. With this new Fast ID, they get to spend more time with their loved ones, instead of queuing at PRC," says Atty. Rudi Padilla, PRC Commissioner.

PRC dedicated six customer booth for FAST ID, where for an extra fee of P300 on top of the regular licensing fee, professionals can get their new IDs after six hours.

TIM Corporation is a 100% Filipino owned IT company established in 1985. It provides hardware, software, maintenance, business recovery, system integration and outsourcing services to some of the country's largest companies.

PROFESSIONAL REGULATION COMMISSION (PRC) LAUNCHES FAST-ID. PRC recently launched Fast-ID, a new service that allows professionals to get their Professional ID within six hours from submitting their application. Photo shows PRC top officials testing the new facility developed by TIM Corporation. Proudly displaying her new Professional ID, which was printed in less than 3 minutes, is PRC Chairperson Leonor Rosano (second from right). With her (from left) are Ms. Jo-an Bautista – PRC Official, Mr. Robert Ong – PRC Official, Dr. Milo Rosas – PRC Commissioner, Hon. Rudi Padilla, PRC Commissioner and Mr. Jose Mari Antonio – TIM President and CEO.

SIDEBAR: Applying for a Professional ID

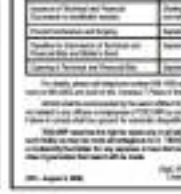
Professionals who wish to secure or renew their Professional licenses and need FAST ID service may go to PRC and complete these five (5) simple steps:

(1) Proceed to registration counter and present duly accomplished application for Professional ID together with requirements and get PRF/PRC. (2) Registrant pays licensing fee plus P300 FAST ID fee to the cashier. (3) Registrant will proceed to FAST ID booth and present Official Receipt for picture taking. (4) Registrant may claim his Professional ID from the FAST ID booth after six hour after his picture is taken. Registrant must sign his name on the PC/RIC to signify receipt of his ID.

DID YOU KNOW

BUCKSBMC paid 3000 to 3007, Mario Maida was the engine with the high-velvet entitlement value in extraordinary attention—QES seemed. This season 10.8 percent of Usher Manila will date in the domestic advantage group were actually enrolled in grade school. *Cyril Kendrick Jayden Ramirez*

INVITATION TO PRE-QUALIFY AND TO BID



Concert for Fr. Tritz

THE GMA GROUP Foundation will sponsor a concert to be held tomorrow at the Xavier School Auditorium in Greenhills, San Juan City, at 8 p.m. to raise funds for its various advocacies, particularly students who are not able to continue their education. The concert is also a tribute to Ordo founder, 94-year-old Fr. Nonnis Tritz, who celebrates 70 years as a Jesuit. Father Tritz has also spent 34 years with street children whom he has taken under his wing. The concert will feature singer Sheryn Regis and actor Dennis Padilla. Tickets are available at the Xavier School Auditorium or Dennis Padilla's Diner. Also seating at special appearance are the Angeles, the country's version of the Eagles. The international opera-pop vocal group. Tickets are priced at P1,000. Call Sheng at 924-5440.000 in Kalaw at 733-4137 and 733-2168 for other details.

Army officers seize power in Mauritania

NOUAKCHOTT — TROOPS OUSTED MAURITANIA'S president in a military coup on Wednesday after he tried to sack senior army officers accused of being behind a political crisis destabilizing the country.

In a move widely condemned by the international community, President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi was arrested after military convoys rolled through the capital Nouakchott and took over the presidential palace and the prime minister's office, apparently without a shot being fired.

Soldiers also took over the national radio and television headquarters, replacing the directors, and shut down the international airport.

A statement read on public radio later said Gen. Ould Abdel Aziz, the head of the presidential guard sacked that morning, was leading the coup.

A newly constituted Military State Council said it was immediately annulling the army appointments made by the president.

A senior close to the new military regime said that the "presidential elections will happen probably earlier than months." The source, speaking on condition of anonymity, added that the council would restore the constitution and institutions like the parliament and the senate.

"The president has just been arrested by a commando, who came to fetch him, arrested him here and took him away," the president's daughter, Amal Mint Cheikh Abdallahi, told Radio France International from the palace.

She said armed men had occupied the presidency and that she was being prevented from leaving the building, but that she had not heard shots fired.

The president's whereabouts were unknown, while Prime Minister Yahya Ould Ahmed Waghf was taken to an army barracks near the presidency, security sources said.

The former interior minister and two other officials considered to be close allies of Abdallahi were also arrested, security sources said.

According to the Mauritanian news agency Agence Soudaktoir d'Information (ANI), Abdel Aziz met the rest of the government ministers on Wednesday afternoon and asked them to come on to their posts.

The European Union and African Union led international condemnation of the coup, with Brussels saying the move jeopardized a $241-million five-year aid package currently being finalized.

At the United Nations, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said he "deeply regrets" the coup and called for "the restoration of constitutional order."

The African Union said it was dispatching Ramtane Lamamra, its peace and security commissioner, to "assess the situation on the ground and to assist in preserving a peaceful solution to the crisis."

Condemnation also came from the United States and regional powerhouses South Africa and Nigeria.

The international airport was closed on Wednesday but the borders and international telephone communications remained open.

Police fired tear gas grenades to disperse a crowd of about 50 people gathered near one of the main markets during the afternoon, local journalists reported, but the capital of the nation of 2.3 million people was otherwise calm.

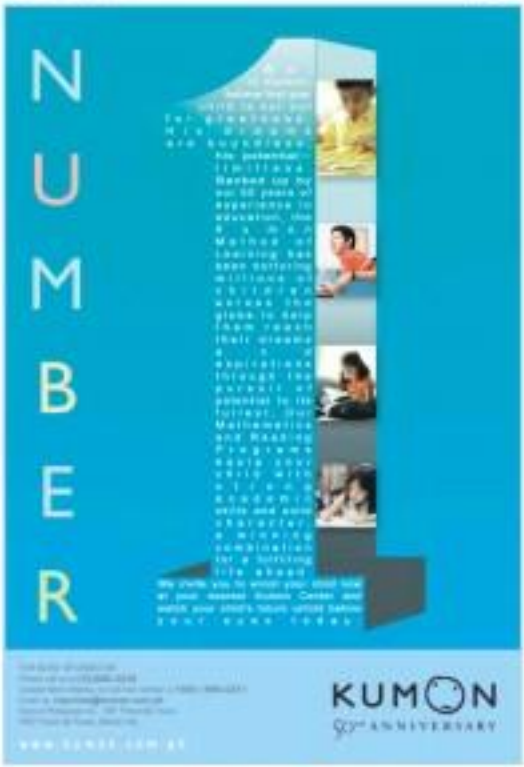
The coup comes a little over a year since Abdallahi came to power in elections hailed as a model of democracy for Africa, following a three-year transition after a bloodless coup in August 2005.

Mauritania has been having a political crisis and on Monday 48 members of parliament walked out on the ruling party less than two weeks after a vote of no confidence in the government prompted a Cabinet reshuffle.

Coup leader Abdel Aziz and another general, Army Chief of Staff Ould Cheikh Mohamed Ahmed, were accused of being behind the mass walkout, political observers in the capital said.

The largely desert country has a history of coups since gaining independence from France in 1960.

On top of growing economic and social unrest in the country which has been hard hit by the global food crisis as it imports more than 70 percent of its food needs, Mauritania was shaken by terrorist attacks recently. AFP



The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Casino

Ivins was anthrax killer, US says

Dead scientist seen as lone culprit in 2001 attacks

WASHINGTON—ARMY SCIENTIST BRUCE IVINS had in his lab highly purified anthrax spores that were linked to the 2001 attacks that killed five American and across to the distinctive envelopes used to mail them, the government declared on Wednesday, releasing a stack of documents to support a damning though circumstantial case.

Ivins, a brilliant but deeply troubled man who committed suicide last week, was the anthrax killer whose mailings sowed the nation in the worst bioterror case in US history just a month after the Sept. 11 terror attacks, federal prosecutors asserted. They were backed by court documents that were a combination of hard DNA evidence, suspicious behavior and, nonetheless, outright speculation.

Ivins' lawyer said the government was "taking a sealed guy and convicting him of mass murder" without real evidence.

Republican Sen. Charles Grassley called for a congressional investigation.

Ivins had submitted false anthrax samples to the FBI to throw investigators off his trail and was unable to provide "an adequate explanation for his late laboratory work hours" around the time of the attacks, according to documents that officials made public to support their conclusions.

Investigators also said he sought to frame unnamed coworkers and had fantasized himself against anthrax and sulfa fever in early September 2001, several weeks before the first anthrax-laced envelope was received in the mail.

Ivins killed himself last week as investigators closed in, and US lawyers Jeffrey Taylor said at a justice department news conference, "We regret that we will not have the opportunity to present evidence in the jury."

"We are confident that Dr. Ivins was the only person responsible for these attacks," Taylor said.

The scientist's lawyer, Paul F. Kemp, hotly disputed that conclusion.

"They didn't talk about one thing that they got as result of all those searches," he said. "I just don't think he did it, and I don't think the evidence exists."

Taylor conceded the evidence was largely circumstantial but insisted it would have been enough to convict.

The prosecutor's news conference capped a fast-paced series of events in which the government partially lifted its veil of secrecy on the investigation of the poisonings that followed closely after the anthrax terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

The new records depict Ivins as deeply troubled, increasingly so as he confronted the possibility of being charged.

"He said he was not going to have the death penalty, but he stood had a plan to kill six workers and other individuals who had wronged him," according to one affidavit. Or a mule to colleagues, Ivins described a feeling of dual personalities, like a mental case.

Ivins was described in the documents as the sole custodian of highly purified anthrax spores with "certain genetic mutations identical" to the poison used in the attacks. AP

WORLDBRIEFS

Russia buries Solzhenitsyn at Moscow monastery

MOSCOW—Russia buried Soviet-era dissident and author Alexander Solzhenitsyn at a 16th-century monastery on Wednesday after a religious ceremony attended by President Dmitry Medvedev, which bore all the hallmarks of a state funeral. Hundreds of elderly Russians came to bid farewell to the deeply religious Nobel literature prize laureate whose body was wrapped in cloths and laid inside his several hours in an open coffin in the Russian Orthodox ceremony in Moscow. Solzhenitsyn, who died at 89, was buried on the Donskoi monastery grounds after the service. Reuters

US probers drop Heath Ledger drug inquiry

NEW YORK—Federal prosecutors have decided not to pursue a criminal case into how the 28-year-old Heath Ledger obtained the powerful painkillers that contributed to his overdose death this year, a law enforcement official said on Wednesday. Prosecutors in the US attorney's office in Manhattan had been overseeing a Drug Enforcement Administration probe into whether the painkillers found in Ledger's system were obtained illegally. But the prosecutors have backed out "because they don't believe there's a viable target," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because no charges have been filed. The decision comes after recent reports that actress Mary-Kate Olsen was demanding immunity before answering questions about the startling death of her close friend and his drug use. Authorities say she was the first person called by a masseuse who found the 28-year-old "Dark Knight" actor's Manhattan body in his Manhattan apartment on Jan. 22. Ledger died after filming "The Dark Night," the latest movie in the "Batman" series, in which he has earned rave reviews for playing a maniacal Joker. The film has taken in more than $468 million domestically as of Monday. AP

Shakespearean theater likely discovered

LONDON—The theater where "The Merchant of Venice" and "Romeo and Juliet" likely debuted and where William Shakespeare himself may have trodden the boards has likely been discovered in east London, archeologists at the Museum of London said. The possible foundations of what is known as simply The Theater, were unearthed by builders excavating the site—a vacant garage—on another interview. Museum archeologists were called to the location to make sure nothing was destroyed, and had a surprise treatment. "We were there, scratching our heads, looking into the trenches, thinking, 'this could be it,'" Jo Lyon, a senior museum archeologist, said on Wednesday. "So we did some more research, and then we found the angled walls. And we all went, 'Oh my gosh, this should be it.'" Other features of similar vintage also have angled walls, so the discovery was significant. Reuters

Bin Laden's driver convicted at Guantanamo

HAMDAN in a courtroom sketch. AP

GUANTANAMO BAY, US NAVAL Base, Cuba—A military jury on Wednesday convicted Osama bin Laden's driver of supporting terrorism but acquitted him on more serious charges of conspiring with al-Qaeda to wage murderous attacks, in the first US war crimes trial since World War II.

The trial of Yemeni captive Salim Hamdan at the remote US naval base in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba was the first full test of the controversial military tribunal authorized by the Bush administration to try foreign captives on terrorism charges outside the regular US court system.

Supporters of the trial by military commission, including the White House, said it had been vindicated by the split verdict. Human rights and civil liberties groups, and military defense lawyers, condemned the process.

The judge ruled Hamdan "a small player" and refused to let the government call an FBI agent to testify about retrieving bodies from the World Trade Center after the Sept. 11 attacks.

The judge, Navy Capt. Keith Allred, said the testimony was irrelevant since Hamdan had been cleared of conspiring with al-Qaeda to carry out any attacks.

Hamdan was captured in Afghanistan in 2001 after the US invasion that followed the Sept. 11 attacks. Reuters

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WHAT'S INSIDE
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Gin Kings eye 2-0 lead vs Express /A32

OLYMPIC SPECTACLE

RP bets march in 'barong' for opening

By Ted S. Molmisa
Sports Editor

BEIJING—THE WORLD'S ONLY emerging superpower takes the reins of its grandest coming-out party Friday night in this smog-choked capital with a lavish opening ceremonies for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad.

No less than 80 heads of state and monarchs, including President Macapagal-Arroyo, will be in attendance when athletes from a record field of 205 countries, including the Philippines, march behind their national colors at the awe-inspiring Bird's Nest main Olympic stadium.

With a cast of 15,000 performers, the kickoff ceremonies is also meant as a positive Olympics ever unfold at exactly eight minutes past 8 p.m. (China Standard Time, same time in Manila), an auspicious moment for the superstitious 1.3 billion strong mainland Chinese.

In the world's most sought-after professional bouts, World Boxing Council lightweight champion Manny Pacquiao, belongs the honor of carrying the Philippine flag at the head of a modest fighting phalanx of 11 athletes plus 10 officials in twilight's opening rites.

Of the 15 Filipinos seeing action in the Games, only archer Hidilyn Javier, shooter Eric Ang and taekwondo jins Mario Antonio Jr. Simon and Tshomlee Go will be making their parade that is supposed to be seen by about 1.8 billion people.

Javier and Ang plunge into action on Saturday and Monday, while Simon and Go don't get an inside shot in Day One.

Only Brown and Go have not checked into the Athletes' Village. They are expected to fly in on the eve of their preliminary fights on Aug. 22, three days before the Games close.

The athletes joining the ceremony are swimmers Miguel Molina, Dylan Bikoy, James Webb, Daniel Coakley and Ryan Arabejo, boxer Harry Tañamor, weightlifter Hidilyn Diaz, long jumpers Marestella Torres and Henry Dagmil and divers Gloria Mae Perez and Ryan Bebelgo.

Marching with them aside from Pacquiao and Paenisvilla are Philippine Olympic Committee spokesperson Joey Romasanta, POC treasurer Julian Camacho, POC secretary general Steve Hontiveros and some still unnamed coaches.

The Filipino marchers will all be wearing barong tshirts the PH chief of mission said Bacolod Rep. Monico Puentevella helped design.

The parade will see a Chinese twist in the order of teams. The countries will be arranged according to the number of strokes it takes to write their names in Chinese.

Because Guinea has a two-stroke name, its athlete will enter the stadium behind those of Greece, the birthplace of the modern Olympics.

The Philippines will be among the last to march, according to International Olympic Committee officials.

Serving as the Philippines' participation in the Summer Games has it near athletes so low and tucked their with us given a target. The country has never seen an Olympic gold medal and the athlete who breaks that curse will pocket P15 million in rewards and bonuses from the government and generous private sponsors.

"The athletes are all ready," declared Puentevella on the eve of the greatest sporting show on earth. "They know it's time to control their nerves and focus on their fight."

The President will get to see Javier and Ang open their respective bids Saturday after deciding to stay one more day.

"Yes, she's staying for one more day to watch them (Javier and Ang)," Puentevella told a Filipino sportswriter yesterday.

Security was tightened another notch in the Games' venues yesterday following Monday's attack that killed 12 policemen in a province northwest of here and the unfurling of a "Free Tibet" banner by a foreign protester from a tower just across from the Bird's Nest.

Competition venues are ringed by PLA soldiers, one for every 50 to 60 meters, standing in stiff attention and oblivious to the extreme heat that envelops Beijing.

Puentevella and other POC officials hoped that the pollution and security will not cause fans play during the next 17 days of battle.

"The athletes' only worries are security, pollution and the rain," he said. "Otherwise, they are all ready to compete."

NOTES: The privatized of building the pools competition venues and of building the Beijing Games, the most expensive ever, may never be known but estimates vary from $20 billion to $40 billion, according to wire news services. The 80,000-capacity Bird's Nest arena costs is skipping $400 million (P20 billion), almost one fifth of the Philippines' 2008 national budget.

CHINA'S weightlifter Zhang Xiangsong practices at the Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics Gym. The 2008 Beijing Olympics open today. —AFP

Coach unhappy with two divers

By Ted S. Molmisa

BEIJING—IF THERE MIGHT BE TO ONE BEloved, they have become a coach's nightmare.

Diver Nyna Beard Bibrija has plumped up and Sheila Mae Reyes, like Bibrija, has become too lost to handle to training.

"They both have become hard-headed," complained Chiang Tieju, the shrewd longtime Chinese coach. "It was better coaching them when they were young, when they were still in their teens."

Zhang, who supervised Reyes and Bibrija's seventh-long Olympic training alongside Olsen's world champions here, said he was not giving up on the two, though.

He's only pleading for understanding from officials of the national aquatics association who might have another idea why his best divers have not been performing up to par.

Perez, Southeast Asia's undisputed diving queen from Davao City, now active in the 3-meter springboard event on Aug. 15 and hopes to better her 22nd-place standing in the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

Still battling through a painful back injury, she finished 17th in a field of 107 in the recent 2008 Fina Diving World Cup here.

Fabiga, on the other hand, showed up at the Athletes' Village at least eight pounds over his ideal diving weight, reportedly infuriating Zhang and Filipino coach Rommel Kong.

The fourth best finisher in the thirty-three of qualifying at the World Cup meet by Germany's Sascha Klein, Bibrija enters the preliminary round of the 10m men's platform competition on Aug. 22, two days before the Games close.

Phil favored to clinch US PGA crown

BLOOMFIELD HILLS, MICHIGAN—VICTORY BY TOURNAMENT favorite Phil Mickelson at this week's U.S. PGA Championship would transform the 2005 season into a very special one for the American left-hander.

In the absence of injured world number one Tiger Woods, Mickelson is the leading contender at Oakland Hills Country Club where he is bidding for his third PGA Tour win of the year.

"This is a big week," former champion Mickelson told reporters during preparation for Thursday's opening round of the 90th PGA Championship.

"Right now my season, with just two wins, is I think just okay. But if I can win a major it changes no doubt and why this event, it would make an okay year a great one."

The world No. 2 experienced similar feelings going into the 2005 PGA Championship at Baltusrol where he won by one shot to claim his second major title.

Mickelson has been lined by British bookmakers William Hill as this week's favorite at 10/1.

Although Mickelson was bitterly disappointed to squander a commanding four-shot lead with four holes to play in last week's WGC-Bridgestone International, he was in optimistic mood for Oakland Hills.

"I would have loved to have won last week, there's no arguing that point, but I really needed to be there like I was," he said.

"I needed to have four good rounds, I needed to feel the pressure and I needed to play well on a tough golf course Sunday here this week. I take a lot of positives out of last week."

Vijay Singh, a double winner of the PGA Championship, will return seven more positive memories into Oakland Hills.

The 41-year-old Fijian overcame an erratic display with his putter to clinch his 22nd career victory on the PGA Tour at the WGC-Bridgestone Invitational on Sunday.

"My iron game was about one of the best weeks I've had for a long, long time," Singh said after closing with a two-under-par 68 at Firestone Country Club.

With four-time champion Woods sidelined for the rest of the year from mid-June after having reconstructive knee surgery, the door is open for a long list of players to drive that week.

Of all the majors in recent times, the PGA attracts the strongest field and yet has been the most likely to throw up a surprise winner.

The championship was won in consecutive years by unheralded Americans Keith Clearwater (2002) and Shaun Micheel, underlining that any player is capable of victory if his game is on song. Reuters

Live coverage on Balls

LIVE FIRST ROUND COVERAGE of the 90th PGA Championship starts Friday at 1 a.m. with coverage on 4 p.m. on Balls. Re-runs also on at Sky Cable 26. The second, third and final rounds will airlive and live at 1 a.m. on Aug. 5, 2:30 a.m. on Aug. 6 and 2:30 a.m. on Aug. 7.

PHIL Mickelson pitches to the 18th green during yesterday's practice round.

Naascu caging opens today

By Marc Anthony Reyes

DEFENDING CHAMPION UP and five-time titlist University of Manila collide today on the hardcourt as the National Athletic Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities extends its 80's supremacy with a big 12-team hoop venture at the Rizal Coliseum.

The Olympians, though, will be missing the services of at least four members of their triumphant 2005 season—Jimmy Mirasiar, Raymond Tiongco, Mark Sabeng and skywalker Ely Arnaiz. Mahagna is not enrolled at last year's meeting five for NU which defeated Ust in the finals.

The Hawks, who will be headed by veteran coach Francis Rodriguez, are leaning on stalwarts Dexter Espina and Ramon Amontoc.

Opening day will begin at 8:00 a.m. in a homage to the Beijing Games.

"It's 8-8-8-8-8 for Season, 84-leading the land of the Beijing Olympics on its 8-8-8," said Naascu president Dr. Jay Adalem of St. Clare College of Takoran.

Seven member schools Intramurals and Games of Subic Bay raised the league membership to 12. Also entered are MBA Computer College, University of Makati, Dimasmarinas ng Lungsod ng Muog, New Era, Cavite Mendiola, Holy Angel-Batangas and San Sebastian Center.

BMP Sandalang Bankoff ng Pilipinas president Manny V. Pangilinan is the guest of honor with chair Jose Mario Montero as keynote speaker. The search for Mr. and Ms. Season is among the inaugural highlights.

US Am: Dottie bows out

DOTTIE AMDEN STRUGGLED with her power and absorbed a 3&2 setback from Julia Peirce of Indiana in the first round of match play of US Women's Amateur Golf Championship at the Eugene Country Club in Eugene, Oregon, Wednesday.

Amden, who barely advanced with an on parbreaker in the second round of the stroke-play elims, fobbed a lot of pars inside five feet as the seven got going in the entire match against her 11 th-ranked rival.

In contrast, Peirce played a steady round, making three birdie putts to seize control and cruise to victory.

Amden, 14, yielded the first two holes on bogeys, then lost after No. 4 but never recovered after she lost No. 5, trailing by as many as four holes after No. 13.

Cyna Rodriguez can be failed to get it to the tournament proper, losing in the four-player playoff for the last berth in the Tagaytay.

National Billiards League draws support

By Jasmine N. Payo

IT'S GO FOR THE COUNTRY'S FIRST professional billiards league as the Billiards Managers and Players Association of the Philippines (BMPAP) and Solar Sports recently forged a memorandum of agreement to stage the event later this year.

"This is it, there is no turning back, and we're all excited to get that ball rolling and start the new era of Philippine billiards," said Antonio "Poach" Pupisi, a long-time pool patron who envisioned the creation of the National Billiards League (NBL).

Heading a broadcast partner in Solar Sports, which is known for pioneering big-time sporting events, will surely but spark the resilience of this dream that ran in the Philippine pool community, including the players, alone."

THE BILLIARDS Managers and Players Association of the Philippines (BMPAP) signs a memorandum of agreement with Solar Sports for the TV coverage of the soon-to-be-launched National Billiards League. Seated 2nd and 3rd from left are billiards godfather Antonio "Poach" Pupisi and Solar Sports COO Peter Chanlongo. The other signatories are (from left) BMPAP co-founders Jonathan Sy and Perry Mariano and Solar's Jude Yarcuan. Standing are Lee Yan Carreon and Roberto Gomez.

The NBL aims to gather the country's top-ten action—including the legendary Efren "Bata" Reyes, former world champions Ramil Alonte and Alex Pagulayan and top-ranked Bonnie Orcullo—and young three-time eight titlist.

"NBL will be the next big thing in Philippine sports entertainment," said BMPAP founder Perry Mariano.

"It will also make billiards a really professional sport. And the players, especially the young ones, can make a career out of it."

Pupisi, Mariano and BMPAP co-founder Jonathan Sy signed the agreement with Solar Sports chief operating officer Peter Chanlongo and vice president for sales and marketing Jude Yarcuan last Wednesday.

"Imagine, that's 60 players who will have a regular income," said Sy. "This is really a dream come true for all of us in Philippine billiards."

BMPAP officials said several sponsors, some of them from the amateurs in the Philippine Basketball Association, have already signified their intention on join the league's maiden race.

Filipino Poker Tour: Fabulous prizes at stake

INQUIRER LIFESTYLE COLUMNIST, PAISA Jose and Filipino Poker Star (FPT) chamber have announced organizers Texas Prizes. Golden boots prominent personalities from the fields of business, fashion, entertainment, media, and the game circuit who have signed up to join the Filipino Poker Tour. All in for Red Cross Poker Tournament introduces at the Metro Card Club in Pasig City.

The FPT is only continental offers winners more than 50 fabulous prizes worth over P500,000 such as grand vacation packages at El Nido Resorts and Club Noah in Isabela, Discovery Shores, Friday's Resort, Boracay Tropics, and Tides Resort in Boracay Steel Facts in Davao, Amorita Resort in Bohol, weekend packages at Makati Shangri-La Hotel, Mandarin Oriental, and Crowne Plaza, spa treatments and gift certificates. Star winners will be entitled to raffle and door prizes.

Held last night were freerolls which offered 40 seats to the five tournaments to mention. Proceeds of buy-ins and rebuys worth P1,000 each will be donated to the Philippine National Red Cross (Makati Chapter).

The game's popularity in the country took an abrupt leap with the waging last year of PokerStars' Asia Pacific Poker Tour in Manila, followed by the holding of the Filipino Poker Tour which has already produced three Filipino millionaires.

The Filipino Poker Tour is sanctioned by Pagcor and sponsored by PokerStars.com, the world's largest online poker site with millions of members.

For details, log on to www.filipinopoker-tour.wordpress.com. Just download the free software from PokerStars.com, go to the "Journey" tab, click on "Regional" then scroll down the list of games and double click on "The Filipino Poker Tour Red Cross Freeroll" and play for free.

Ababa snares crown by six

JOSHUEL ABABA RAN WHAT SEEMED AN insurmountable lead and avoided a spattering finish by Jessie Balandres to capture the elated leg of the Increasing Filipinas Amateur Golf Tour yesterday at the Splendido Taal Golf and Country Club.

Balandres pulled off a big upset in the special championship division with a three-shot win while Mares Olives and Bea Jacinto topped Class A and Class B, respectively.

Already up by six after 54 holes, Ababa found himself in a tie with Balandres for the lead when he bogeyed the 18th and 17th holes. But Balandres stumbled on a double bogey on the 13th followed by a bogey on the 16th, giving Ababa room to complete the coast-to-coast victory.

Ababa's final nine effort of 37 enabled him to endorse a 76 and rode another triumph as Balandres settled for a 77 after dropping four strokes on the last six holes.

Ababa had a 72 hole total of 209 while Balandres ended up in the tie second with Ded Ribares, who also posted a 77, at 209.

Mark Fernando capped a sweep of the top places for the Calamgan stable by placing fourth with a 77-308.

Mathay fired a 78-for 230, bearing veterans Polly Yang and Dave Hernandez by three and Wesley Mariano by four for the 36-hole special championship phase of the event. Bonifacio Pitacio, Autobuzz, Galloway Shotmaker Consolidated, Inc., Wow Magic Sing, Tiktok, Pagcor Bagaytay, Cantera Dalmatians, Gospel and Wow 89.1, Bacoor's Philippines (Club Cat) and Autobuzz (Honda motorcycle) are hole-in-one sponsors.

Igan Cup blasts off at Intramuros

THE SEVENTH IGAN CUP, A FUNDRAISING PROject of Igan Foundation, will be held at Club Intramuros today. Registration starts at 11 a.m while tee-off time is 1 p.m.

SPORTSWATCH

Chery car up for grabs in Pasay Mayor's Cup

A CHERY QQ SUV AND A MOTORO EQUIPment will be the hole-in-one prizes in the 6th Pasay City Mayor's Cup at Villamor on Aug. 10.

The annual charity event, with PAL, SM Investments Inc. and Pagcor as major sponsors, will be for 48 holes.

"We extended our gratitude to duloy Group and Mr. Lonnie Gopez of Moyano for the Chery and golf prizes for our tournament," said Felix "Jun" Amante Jr., chair of the organizing committee.

Pasay Mayor Pareno "Imotot" Antolin's representatives as well as the overall and senior champions will each receive a new Chery while runners-up are also qualified for attractive raffle prizes during the awarding ceremonies.

60 fights in Pasay cockfest

AND THEIR TOUGH-LOOK DERBY with P100,000 on the line and 60 fights on tap will be staged today at Pasay City Cockpit.

The unit be the second of four 3-cock derbies for August, according to PCC pit managers Eric dela Rosa and Bonifacio Claro. A total of 600 matches were staged in the first cockfest last week.

To be contested by the SWO and boys group, the event requires an entry fee of P1,000 (each participant will get a bottle of Tanduay).

Tie-in to the 3-cock derby will be on Aug. 11 (Ulo Manamak, Tony and Sandy group) and Aug. 23 (Ulo and Bo Cabral). The Showdown is 3-stag derby of promoter Danny Ty kicks off on Aug. 28.

Makati hosts 3-cocker

REMAINING ENTRY ACES IN LL BEhind the leadership of Mikael Calvente's last-cock derby for 2005, a 3- cock event that will feature 40 matches.

The PCU Sports and Amusement Corp. added a guaranteed prize of P200,000 for an entry fee of P5,500. Entries must be submitted on Sunday from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Last Aug. 4, representatives Pete Ilem (Tata Pete) and Norman Rivera and Oliver Arenas (SA Gallos) topped the PCU 4-cock derby.

Up next is the "First NP (Annual 3-stag derby" on Aug. 18.

CYCLING EXECUTIVES The Burlington-Elixir cycling team, composed of 20 executives and businessmen, have won six titles in the Philippine Executive Cycling Association-sanctioned tournament this year. Members include actor Dolphy Quizon (center), Arnel Ty, Robert Haguisan and Richard Ong. With them is their trainer, two-time Tour champion Renato Dulawan.

TASAM HOW (left) remains focused on a possible Olympic gold. AL TAN

Boxing draw crucial factor for Tañamor

By Ted S. Melendres

BEIJING—NATIONAL BOXING COACH Ed Gaupi got little sleep last night thinking about a thousand and one things to his prized ward Harry Tañamor.

His main worry is this afternoon's crucial draw for the Light flyweight matches, one that would basically define Tañamor's medal fortunes to these Games of the 29th Olympiad.

"I know I shouldn't be splitting an hair thinking about the draw," said Gaupi in Pilipino. "But we are paying for a lot of luck. We don't want Harry to face the highest rated seimen like the Chinese and the Russian this early."

Gaupi was referring to world champion, double gold medalist Zou Shiming and Russia's world No. 1 David Ayrapetyan, the top two bidders in Tañamor's crowded weight class.

Because for his stung favorite forwards, the Chinese made the Filipino a sitting duck for his lunging right punches or last year's world meet in Chicago.

The defect lent result, of course, is for a first-round bye, but Tañamor's handlers, including Cuban coach Reinaldo Moyano Tiomet, prefer not to bank on landing one of the opening day's three byes. If the fight is the first round, the Zamboanga pug will climb the ring on Aug. 13.

In all, 29 other fighters are in Tañamor's division, including nine seeded for his bottom in the pact. And of the 13 representatives—already the minimum of four nations and allies this year—and Asiatics duck from Lao Yaoan are the most enigmatic.

The 29-year-old Tañamor, the country's only boxing hope, has not fought Ayrapetyan, a slugger with a reputedly deadly combination punches who conquer most of the time in Europe and the Americas.

Yeast is a completely unknown factor, said national amateur boxing chief Manny Lopez.

Gaupi and Tiomet said Tañamor looomed up in a light sparring with the fist Laotian early early last night as they could at least approximate the southpaw during the preliminary matches.

"Oh, boy, if there, he is ready for his first fight and knows what to expect in this level," said Gaupi.

Boxing's light flyweight class houses the Philippines' most bonafide source of medals in the previous five Olympics. Manuel's "Dodot" Tolentino landed a silver in the 1996 Summer Games in Atlanta while Velasco's older brother Med and Leopoldo Serantes snatched a bronze each in 1992 in Barcelona and 1988 in Seoul, respectively.

Accel stakes P1.8M incentive

AFTER P15 MILLION AND TWO brand-new cars offered by various donors, yet another reward is being raised for possible Filipino medal winners in the Beijing Olympics by leading Philippine sports apparel maker Accel, but with a different twist.

Accel president Willie Ong yesterday dangled P1,778,88 worth in business opportunities to be shared among the gold, silver and bronze medalists from the Beijing Games, which start today.

According to Ong, Accel is setting aside P1 million for the gold medal winner, P500,000 for the silver medalist, and P278,888 for the bronze medalist.

"So far, aside from President Arroyo who gave P15 million to cover the reward to P25 million for the Beijing gold medalist, Accel is the first to give more than P1 million in incentives among the private sector donors," Ong said.

Accel chair Philip Go, however, said medal winners will not receive their rewards from Accel in the form of cash.

Smog major Beijing Olympics sore

By Ted S. Melendres

BEIJING—360 WONDER, BEIJING IS hopelessly swapped in the dark shadows of air pollution, as cyber-boxing relatives to the Games of the 29th Olympiad.

Less than a year before the long-dreaded Olympics were to begin, the haystacks of China's first largest municipality—which employed about 220,000 workers, according to some reports have—were still spewing acrid, chemical-laced smoke into the air. Chemical cuts are not unusual, and so were the skin diseases it brought to users of its 18 million residents.

Two months before the opening ceremonies of the $40 billion Olympics, about three million vehicles still plied the capital's five ring roads.

And as the humiliation of China's capital began in the run-up to the Summer Games, construction boom raised massive villages, tilted halting, and other old buildings to the ground, generating tons of dust and further aggravating the already serious pollution nightmare.

The very pros on quality in the not three Games plans that could finding another ancient city of Tianjin, owner of group matches in men's and women's football, never fallen short.

"I wonder how they could still breathe here," said a Filipino sportswriter who's on his second trip to Beijing in three months. "Yeah choke in the smoke."

What gems will President Arroyo wear to the Olympic ball?

BARE EYE

Boyet Tronidad

THEY CAN SAY EVERYTHING they want to say about Beijing and its ground-zero but, yes, it isn't to emphasize, it won't be a little-and-cool Olympics. Cities will be burning starting today.

There was story rumbled on the eve of the opening.

Out in the Tanks, unconfirmed blitz data should appear thanks to assumed weather headers.

There will also be restrictions and pocket protests as expected.

At least one American Olympic gold medalist had been stripped of his Chinese visa even hidden intentions.

But there's no need to grope and seek.

...

What promises to be the finest two-wiz Olympics of our time will explode bright and clear for the Games fan's tuneful when China puts on its best hosting competitions among the world's greatest athletes.

Some 80 heads of state, including President Macapagal-Arroyo, will grace the grand ball.

It will be a first for the country, our chief of state, a week-and gallits, flying over to the city of the Olympics and putting on her best for the once-in-a-lifetime party.

Of course, she's expected to wear only modest jewelry.

Moderate. President doesn't happen to be a dictator since of the tall, ever-spoiling lavish likeness.

...

But look what gem treasure President Arroyo has decided to bring to the affair.

Filipino boxing superhero, Manny Pacquiao, the world's best pound-for-pound boxer in his weight class, joined the President on the PAL plane to the Chinese capital yesterday morning.

In today's opening ceremony, that decision to make Pacquiao the first member for the RP contingent could be equal to President Arroyo parting the affair swagged in gold.

It will indeed be a very proud moment for President Arroyo and the entire nation.

Of course, it sets not easy talking along Pacquiao, a confessional champ not qualified to be member of the RP amateur boxing team.

There had to symbolically appoint him into the prestigious luggage.

...

It was a brilliant move that President Arroyo made in opting to appoint Pacquiao Olympic ambassador.

In the first place, that report that Pacquiao never even once fought in an amateur was corrosive, to say the least.

Records at the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines (Abap) would bear out that, before he entered the ring as a full-fledged pro, Pacquiao trained and fought a few bouts as an amateur, obviously with hopes of becoming a future Olympian himself.

Pacquiao did not have to wander why he had to carry the Philippine flag when he leads the march past for the country in the opening ceremonies at Bird's Nest Stadium tonight.

...

Meanwhile, it would also be the finest and the greatest to host the match for other contingents.

Build for Spain, Federer for Sweden.

Will it be Phelps or Lebron James for the USA?

It will be the best for each country out there.

With Pacquiao, there will predictably be wholesale curiosity seen his former Olympic words.

For example, if he cannot compete and land a medal, won't his silent as national flag bearer be as symbolical as wearing wearing native to the grand Olympic ball?

Pitted's amazing Pacquiao Olympic ambassador and leaving him in Beijing a big enough mess?

Grudgingly speaking, Pacquiao would be out of place among the other sporting greats, who would all compete and take, what they branch the greatest show on earth in Beijing this evening.

There's also the danger of sending the country first, in calling a flag bearer who's not qualified to compete. RP has again shown up unprepared. So the full-scale Olympic gold-medal chase.

Gin Kings eye 2-0 lead vs Express

[illegible] TIGHT (Tuna Dela, Alitajos)
1 p.m. —Rizal Memorial (0-1)

By Marcus R. Castillo

ANTIPOLO—CHRIS ALEXANDER has outplayed all his counterparts in the entire Smart Piatros Cup playoffs.

And coaches of the other teams that got flattened along the way by Barangay Ginebra have been all too willing to concede Alexander's handiwork.

"I admit, Chris Alexander surprised Steve Thomas tonight," Air21 coach Bo Perasol said Wednesday night after the Express stumbled against the Gin Kings in the opener of their best-of-seven series for the season-ending crown at the Antipolo Coliseum.

Never has the efficient and hardworking Thomas been so dominated in his brief PBA career, a sign that papers stuff for the Kings and not that definitely skirts the NCAA freak trait.

"I feel we still let (a) much lower [stats] for Game 2," Perasol added with a tinge of confidence despite that 105-96 Game 1 loss. "But for (Thomas) since do a better job for us."

But Ball coach Yeng Guiao also said some words to that effect in order to fire up Jabari Narcis, another team-mountain at Thomas who got humbled by Alexander on the way to a 6-rebound outcry of the Burske in the second-half.

Alexander, the 7-foot-1 giant who is looming to be the logical choice for the first league second, shot 10 points, plotted down 23 rebounds while swatting away five Air21 attempts in a performance that earned the Kings.

It was the 13th straight victory for the Kings dating back to the eliminations plus sweeps of its first two opponents in those playoffs. Ginebra has not lost a game for close to three months now.

Incidentally, the first league second and the Player of the Conference might will be handed out before the game, set at 7 p.m. at the Ynares Center here.

An interesting thing as new also was the fact that Thomas missed 11-3 of his 13 attempts from the field.

"The good thing about being 2-0 up is that we put the burden of adjustment on them," said Barangay Ginebra coach Ang Ubaldo. "At the same time, we have the luxury of doing some of our adjustments while in the land."

One adjustment that Ubaldo might make is find a team after one empire point guard Paul Asi[illegible].

Asnall, used-time and standing no more than 5-foot-9, wound the scored during the warm-ups with gravity-defying dunks before starting off the bench to spark the Ginebra offense late in the first period. But the former UE Warrior pulled his hamstring while going for a breakaway layup near the first quarter horn and is listed [illegible] as doubtful.

CHRIS Alexander shows a few rail-thing dunk.

So settles for draw, tumbles to joint 10th

Standings after the rounds:

4.5 points—C. J. Ortiz, U. Hamdi (Egypt); a.B—F. Sabet (Azerbaijan); Y. Hou (China); C. Lo (Italy); I. Popov (Russia); A. Brun (Germany); L.R. Lem (Vietnam); I.R. Bayek (Belarus); 5.5—M. Ta (HUN); S. Bo[illegible] (Croatia); A. Ramos (Costa Rica); M. Lazo Rosa (Mexico); S. Dhgalia (Mexico); M. Ramos (Mexico); C. Hernandez (Colombia); A. Gonzalez; A. Ni Wahyanya (Indonesia); S. Prasad (India); T. Wing (China); M. Bartolomeo (Israel); O. Bauernfeind (Germany); S. Sanchez (Poland); O. Stefanski (Russia)

GAZIANTEP, TURKEY—FILIPINO GRANDmaster Mickey So was held to another draw, this time by GM Alejandro Ramirez of Costa Rica, and found himself in a tie for 10th to 24th places after five rounds of the 2010 World Junior Chess Championships at the Sahit Kamil Municipality Sport Hall here Wednesday.

So, who is seeking a fitting follow-up to his stunning Dubai Open triumph in Dubai early this year, failed to find the winning line and settled for a draw with his lower-rated Costa Rican opponent [Elo 2205].

Still, the 14-year-old high school student of St. Francis College (Rizzal) remained on the upper half of the 100-player standings with 3.5 points on two wins and three draws.

The Filipino champion stood only a bit down behind GM Li Chao of China and David Howell of England, who defeated GM Ivan Belic of Croatia and GM Eltaj Safarli of Azerbaijan, respectively.

Both two victories came against FM Siddik Dilmen [Elo 2326] of Indonesia in the first round and IM Ivaro Rivera [Elo 2472] of Honduras in the third round early Monday.

He drew his two matches against IM Deep Sengupta [Elo 2454] of India in the second round and GM Manuel Leon Hoyos [Elo 2453] of Mexico in the fourth round.

Easily recover

"I think he (So) is still very much in contention. With eight rounds left, he should easily recover and make another drive (for) for the title," said National Chess Federation of the Philippines (NCFP) president Prospero "Butch" Pichay, who is personally monitoring So's performance in this tournament being held in the sixth largest city in Turkey.

Orbray said NCFP secretary-general Mayor Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino encouraged Sopido dispute their combat start compared to his explosive showing in the first half of last year's tournament held in Slovenia, Armenia.

Last year, So opened his campaign by posting four wins and two draws in the first six rounds before losing steam and settling for 20th place overall.

Another Filipino bet, NM Haridas Pascua, forced Azerbaijan Oladgazi of Turkey to raise his score to two points out of a possible five.

The 15-year-old student from Mangaweyen, Hungarians has now nine and three losses.

In the 6th round, So will take on IM Hrant Melkumyan [Elo 2507] of Armenia, while Pascua will meet IM Adjan Pineda [Elo 2295] of Croatia.

LB MALU's Baxter Maluden defies the defense put up by University of the East's Hans Thiele (left) yesterday

Archers exact revenge over cold UE Warriors

By Jazmine M. Paya

WITH JV CASIO REGAINING HIS SHOOTing touch and the Ian Sulle breath delivering another solid production, the Green Archers looked every bit like the defending champions anew.

The Archers avenged a recent loss to the University of the East, coming on a 79-64 victory over the surprisingly error-prone Warriors in the 73rd UAAP men's basketball competition yesterday at the Araneta Coliseum.

Casio rebounded from a recently productive by knocking in 25 points, most of them coming in key moments that found the Archers in double-digit leads for most of the second half.

"It's a very good sign on our part," said coach Franz Pumaren after his Archers recovered from a 68-62 setback against his younger brother Derick Pumaren to grab sole second at 6-2.

"The score didn't compare to Distance back. This kind of game will help us down the stretch."

Rather, Jonathan Jalalon unloaded a career-high 21 points as National University rolled to its first back-to-back wins in five years with a 72-59 nod of the University of the Philippines.

Jalalon fooled the Bulldogs' camp in 58-48 when Edwin Asoro helped the Bulldogs keep the Maroons at bay in the second half to finish with an impressive all-around effort of 18 markers, nine rebounds, four assists, three steals and two blocks.

"They were very composed, especially in the third and fourth quarter," said coach Manny Dandan of the Bulldogs, who followed up on their 69-61 upset win over the Far Eastern University.

"This is very important for us going into the game with UE on Sunday. We need that kind of composure."

Archer Rico Maierhofer contributed 11 points and six rebounds to lead a strong performance by the second unit, which accounted for nearly half of La Salle's total output with a combined 34 points.

"We threw them off, we gave them a different look," said Pumaren.

Hobbled by turnovers, the Warriors never recovered from such a 4-4 card—suffered numbers setback when their top scorer in their last game, James Martinez, had to sit out most of the first half due to an improper uniform.

The Bulldogs, who joined the Maroons at 2-6, last pulled off a double victory in 2003 against powerhouses La Salle and Ateneo.

Jalalon, who fired 12-2 putters from beyond the arc, capped a pivotal third-quarter run with a triple as the Bulldogs outscored the Maroons, 17-8, for a 52-44 edge from 28-all.

The Archers led by as many as 16 points, 64-48, as the Warriors committed 21 turnovers.

For most of the first half, the Warriors had the jitters as the players who assisted in their first-round triumph over La Salle five days earlier.

Martinez, who shot 13-of-his 19 points here, beyond the arc in his last game, brought the young playing shoots and only got to play in the final two minutes of the second quarter.

The Archers played without sophomore guard Simon Atkins, who's still recovering from a subpleural injury and freshman center Marlon Bautista, who will be out for the rest of the season due to an anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injury.

The scores:

First Game:

MU 72—Jalalon 21, Asoro 18, Garcia 10, Pedrosada 8, Tangcal 4, Agabat 3, Berry 2, Salazar 2, Estacerzo, Mendez 1, Abigal 0, Dela Cruz 0, Dalisayo 0, Lao 0.

UP 59—Ga 14, Jimenez 12, Salvacion 9, Reyes, G. Jones 7, Dela Paterna 2, Santiago 1, Lopez 1, Gamboa 0, Ocampo 0, Mendoza 0, Aquino 0, Magsaysay.

Quarters: 19-18, 28-22, 52-44, 72-59.

Second Game:

AdU 79—Cruz 25, Maierhofer 11, Mangahas 8, Sena 8, Avelino 8, Villanueva 8, Mendoza 6, Mahinay 2, Nieto 2, Augustus 0, Salcedo 0.

FEU 64—Arellano 15, Zagala 11, Enoc 10, Jarin 9, Llagas 6, Tuaño 4, Mallillin 3, Lee 3, Espiritu 0, Rabe 0, Dizon 0, Santiago 0.

Quarters: 15-15, 36-30, 50-40, 79-64.

Gaddi seeks another big feat in Shell karting

FOLLOWING HIS IMPRESSIVE feat in the Asian Karting Open, young Christian Gaddi of Iloilo Racing looks forward to another big finish this Sunday in the fifth leg of the 2010 Shell Helix Karting Super Series at the Kart Track of the Enchanted Kingdom.

The nine-year-old Gaddi, backed by Hugo Bonnaire, Hugo Kashanjee and Indranil, expressed his deep gratitude to the all-out support of his school, Christ Quezon City, in his chosen sport when he's now the sole leader in both the Cadet 80 and Mini-ROK classes.

After sweeping all the races in the Asian Karting Open, Gaddi now holds a total of 271 points, 51-point up on Gab Dacuan. He also secured the lead from Sebastian Tomas Carrol in the mini-ROK division with 204 points or a 34-point advantage over Carrol.

"The big support of the school and my classmates was really a huge inspiration to do my best and bring home not just for Claret School but for the country as well," said Gaddi.

"And I will again bring Claret big support to deliver another big feat when we compete again in the Indonesian leg of the Asian Karting Open on Aug. 15-17 in Bontal," he added.

For now, Christian will be focusing his sights on keeping his grip of the solo lead in the Shell Helix Karting Super Series.

While he's very much focused in the Cadet 80 class, Gaddi expects big challenges in the Mini-ROK class up against Carrol, Jem Calderon and Klin Cedric Sison.

Moreover, the fast but narrow track of the Enchanted Kingdom could add a big twist, so a slight miscalculation could result into a big disaster in the race.

"I know that it will be enough race, as the other drivers are also catching up on points. But with my karting mother Tina and teammates Jed Benitez, Sean Hamoguin, Franco Reyes, Mike Rivera and RG Romero behind me, I believe I have great chances in setting pole titles. I'll try my very best," Gaddi further added.

CHRISTIAN GADDI's flying race

ALL-OUT SUPPORT! The Filipino team on the Olympics gather last week for a special send-off party. Pizza Hut and Dairy Queen sponsored the meal and thanksgiving dinner also attended by Philippine Olympic Committee president Peping Cojuangco (seventh from left) and the athletes' families and supporters.

Milo marathon Legaspi leg Sunday

MILO MARATHON'S SEARCH FOR qualifiers to the National Finals on Nov. 30 in Metro Manila continues next this Sunday's staging of an elimination run in Legaspi City.

Last Sunday's four simultaneous elimination runs were held by Allan Ballesteros in Metro Manila in 2:31:24 and Alnor Tolentino 2:21:22, in Cebu City Angelito Bell, 1:30:19 and Madelyn Cuevas, 1:37:02, in Davao City, Joel Langadis, 1:31:10 and Jhe-Ann Genayong, 1:23:30; and in Tarlac City by Eduardo Bautista in 1:33:32 and Anna Vergara in 1:25:12.

Organized by the provincial and municipal sports council with Louis Bello, executive assistant to the city mayor as project chair, the Legaspi City leg has attracted 3,000 runners and 50 schools participating in the three dance competitions.

Mitsu Gen Asia Auto Sakuda, and Legaspi City Mayor Noel E. Rosal have been invited to flag the starting gun for the 21K, and 10K events at 6 a.m. Under 15-km. director general of Race no. Rufino Fernandez, who sponsored 300 kids in the 3K kiddie run will fire the starting gun for the 3K race. They will also be on hand to award the prizes to top winners at the awarding rites that will start at 7:30 a.m.

Cash runners from the previous remaining the Bicol region are earning points in the 21K event paving the city's major thoroughfares and ending in front of the city hall.

Champions in the men's and women's division win P30,000 each plus trophy and a trip ticket to the grand finals on Nov. 28 featuring provincial champions hailing for the top prize of P75,000.

According to Rudy Hinosolay, Milo Marathon national organizer, the races will shift to Naga City on Aug. 15, and San Pablo City on Aug. 24.

'Black' Olympics feared

Power outage threatens opening ceremonies

BEIJING—WITH THE BEIJING OLYMPICS set to start on Friday, China is struggling with deepening power shortages across the country that are set to rival the crisis in 2004.

The opening ceremony is sure to attract a huge television audience across the country and people are concerned by the prospect of not being able to watch it.

"That would be outrageous," said Li Jing, a tax businessman and sports lover in landlocked Guizhou province in southwestern China.

"I do expect nationwide and other distractions if power went out all during the opening ceremony."

Power rationing has been introduced in nearly a half of China's provinces and industrial users frequently had their electricity supply cut off as demand surged along with rising temperatures. Supply was limited because coal-fired power plants were running with dwindling coal stocks.

But grid officials are confident that Chinese will be able to sit in front of their television screens to watch the grand opening ceremonies without concerns about power.

"Residential consumption accounts for only 20 percent of China's total power demand, a cut in an emergency would be enough for say in many many families," said an official with the State Grid Corp. of China's China's leading grid operator.

"We have informed some local governments that ensuring enough power supply during the Olympic period is of high importance, though some may still prefer power supply to their jurisdictions," the official said, declining to identify himself because he is not an official spokesperson.

In China, supply is residents and public facilities including government buildings, hospitals and schools is often prioritized while industrial users have to cut our orders there are shortages.

"One important example of ensuring power supply to urban and rural areas is to have our province's people watch opening and closing ceremonies as well as broadcast of games at home in case," Jiang Daming, governor of coastal Shandong province, said in a report on government website www.sdem.gov.cn.

Local grid in Guangzhou, a manufacturing hub of southern Guangdong province, will temporarily halt all diesel-run(metal) blackouts on Aug. 8 and Aug. 24, the days when the Olympics begin and end.

"We will try all our effort to ensure power supply to residents so everyone can watch the ceremony," said Zhang Ruiyong, head of News Department with the State Grid Corp.

Chinese basketball player Yao Ming will carry the host nation's flag at the opening ceremony. The 7-foot-6(96-cm) Rockets center is China's most popular athlete.

Reuters

VOLUNTEERS find time to rest during a man's badminton training session. AFP/FILE

Joint Korea march not happening in Beijing

BEIJING—SOUTH AND NORTH KOREA will not march together in Friday's opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics.

IOC president Jacques Rogge says negotiations for a joint march failed. He calls it a "setback for peace."

The Koreans' names will instead march one behind the other in line with the Mandarin alphabet.

Athletes from the two Koreas marched together in the same uniform under the blue and white "unification flag" at the 2000 and 2004 Olympics.

Rogge said Thursday he had seen letters to the presidents of both Koreas urging a joint march to Beijing but the initiative was rejected. He said the IOC accepts decisions of sovereign governments.

Athletes from the two Koreas, still technically at war since the 1950-53 Korean conflict, marched together under a unity banner in Sydney in 2000 and at Athens in 2004, when bilateral relations were thawing.

In 2005 the two rivals even said they wanted to field a joint team for the Beijing Olympics, but the plan foundered on disagreements over the composition of the team.

The shooting of a South Korean tourist by a North Korean soldier last month added to political tension and clouded hopes for sporting diplomacy in Beijing. AP

Japan's top swimmer vows: I'll break records

BEIJING—JAPAN'S KOSUKE KITAJIMA has promised more world records in his bid to retain his Olympic 100 and 200 meter breaststroke titles in Beijing.

KOSUKE Kitajima

Kitajima, the 200 world record holder, was supremely confident of picking up Hansel's Olympic misery in the 100, boasting that he was in the best shape of his life.

"I want to break world records," Kitajima told a news conference in Beijing on Thursday. "I'm confident of that. I'm really looking forward to seeing Hansen." Kitajima is one of Japan's main gold medal hopes but the 25-year-old rejected the notion he was under any added pressure in Beijing.

"It's not the size of pressure (Chinese hurdler) Liu Xiang is under. I've worked a long time for these Olympics and I'm really looking forward to it."

Kitajima memorably celebrated victory over Hansen in Athens by staring wide-eyed into a TV camera and whooping "I kicked his butt"

Hansen, who will battle the 100-meter world record, has dominated Kitajima since the Japanese swimmer again peaked at precisely the right time.

Reuters

JAPAN'S Kosuke Kitajima practices his strokes during a training session in the National Aquatics Center

3 Russians test positive for dope

MOSCOW—THREE RUSSIAN track athletes have tested positive for the banned substance EPO in the latest doping-related incident to mar the country's preparations for the Beijing Olympics, a Russian news agency reported Thursday.

Vladimir Kanaikin, the 20-kilometer world-record holder, along with shot-putter Voyevodin—the 2008 bronze medalist at the Athens Olympics—and fellow Russian tested positive in an out-of-competition test in their hometown of Kamensk in April, their coach Viktor Chyagin told the news agency All Sport.

Kanaikin, who had qualified for the Beijing Olympics and was considered a medal favorite, was dropped from the Russian team and replaced by 2001 world champion Sergei Kirdyapkin.

Last week, seven Russian women were provisionally suspended by the IAAF for doping-related matters. The list included Tatiana Tobishova, a world record-holder and world champion middle-distance runner who was banned in with both the 800 and 1,500 runners at the Olympics.

On Tuesday, cyclist Vladimir Gusev was dropped from the Russian squad for Beijing, just days after his team said it terminated his contract because of irregular data that showed up in testing. AP

Birthday boy Federer hopes to nail first gold

RACER Federer practices on the Olympic Green Tennis Center

BEIJING—ROGER Federer is thinking more about the No. 8 than the No. 1 ranking he will lose after the Olympic tennis tournament.

The 12-time Grand Slam champion's birthday coincides with Friday's opening ceremony for the Beijing Olympics, which are being staged on one of the luckiest days in the Chinese calendar.

He must then four-year reign as tennis No. 1 will end on Aug. 18, regardless of how he fares in Beijing, after Rafael Nadal entered enough points to overhead the Swiss star.

The No. 8 has long been considered fortunate in China, where people pay a premium to have it included in their telephone numbers and license plates. With the official start of the 2008 Olympics on the eighth day of the eighth month of the eighth year, Federer hopes some of the luck that it's supposed to generate will rub off on him.

He has not won an Olympic medal at two previous trips and, for the first time since 2003, has reached August without at least one major title for the season. He was upset in the Australian Open semifinals after an illness necessitated his preparations and lost the finals at the French Open and Wimbledon to Nadal—snapping his streak of five titles at the All England Club.

"People expect more from me after my great last five years. But I hope I can still steer that season with either this or the US Open," Federer said Thursday.

Federer, who will face Russia's Evgeny Tsymbarov in the first round, said winning an Olympic gold medal would be among his greatest achievements. To celebrate it, he's living away from the Athletes' Village.

"I go down once in a while to see the other Swiss athletes and get the Olympic feel. I was there the other day and it's not possible really. There's so many athletes who need passports, I don't mind it, but every day for I don't know how long, it's cool for initial preparation to win the gold," he said. AP

GERMAN basketball player Dirk Nowitzki expects an Olympic hairstyle.

BEIJING BELLE

World and Olympic champion Misty May-Treanor of the United States dives for the ball during a practice session at Beijing's Chaoyang Park beach volleyball ground. USA and Brazil, two nations blessed with more sand and sun than most, will resume their battle for beach volleyball domination in Beijing after virtually monopolizing gold in previous editions.

Chinese volunteers tired but happy

BEIJING—WITH MORE THAN 1.5 MILLION volunteers in Beijing for the Olympics, not every job is going to be glamorous. Just ask the dozens students doing their bit for the Games in the bowels of Wangfujing subway station.

Five hour shifts giving directions to confused tourists may not be every teenager's idea of a fun way of spending the summer holidays but Wang Dandan for one was enjoying it.

"I think the job is fun and interesting," the 19-year-old law student said. "Many people came to me to ask the way and sometimes just to have a chat. They say 'your object is lovely', 'what's your phone number?'"

As well as the 100,000 volunteers directly working on the Olympics, Beijing has recruited 400,000 "city" volunteers and more than a million "postal" volunteers.

Liu Jian, head of both the Beijing Olympic volunteer department and the city's Communist Youth League, hopes it will leave a legacy of volunteering long beyond the Games. Reuters

Fr. Uy joins candidates for PSC post

By Marc Anthony Reyes

PHILIPPINE SPORTS COMMISSION EXECutive director Fr. Mo Uy reportedly joined the roster of possible replacements for commissioner Ambrosio de Lima, PSC insiders have reportedly.

It would be an unprecedented move if he makes it as Uy is a Catholic priest, who served as vice president for finance of University of San Carlos in Cebu City where he was also its athletic moderator.

PSC chair Butch Ramirez said Uy would be a welcome addition to the agency, adding that the present executive director of the agency has been getting praises for his fine work since replacing Cesar Purdas.

Former Makati councilor King Yabut was also named among the possible successors along with the usual commissioner candidates for the 16-year-old sports agency.

De Lima is reportedly on his way out in the wake of a PSC revamp that started last week when former Olympic swimmer Akiko Thompson was named as new commissioner replacing Joey Mercado.

SAINT Clows of San Beda tries to block a step out of a San Sebastian double team in their NCAA game yesterday.

NCAA SENIORS

JRU, SSC aim to extend runs

TWO OF THE NCAA MEN'S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT'S hottest teams put their winning streaks on the line against different rivals as the closer for Final Four berths intensifies at the Ginoo Gymnasium in Pasay City.

The four-time defending champion Jose Rizal U Bombers (6-0) aim for their ninth consecutive victory against the Perpetual Help Altas in the main game at 4 p.m., while San Sebastian's game up against Mapua earlier at 2 p.m. is a do-or-die that could have greater significance over the rest of the second round.

The Stags will be buoyed by their 68-57 triumph over the Philippine Christian University Dolphins Wednesday. It was their first win after a triumph, after losing four of their first five games.

"We're starting to play better as a team," said Stags coach Jerge Gallent.

Jerick Bonsol is keen to frame Stags backcourtmates Jeric Bolgado and Jimbo Aquilo's late in the boards quarter just as PCU threatened.

"It's good that we're playing this way as this stage because it makes our target of a final four slot more realistic."

The Cardinals are coming off back-to-back losses, the latest coming at the hands of the Bombers, 74-57. Mapua's top gun Ruben Dela Pena remains doubtful due to back spasms.

Top rookie Allan Mamaclay, though, has stepped up for the Cardinals in the first round, together with skipper Mel Bracewell.

The Altas, whose lone victory came at the expense of the Stags in opening day, were the first team to finish the first round three weeks ago.

They clash against a fourthers crew rejuvenated by Mac Cagoco, Aries Wilson and James Sena, whose last second lay-up killed JRU in a 68-66 stepping of PCU at the close of the first round last week.

Ordell F. Rapsa

NBA Gov. Zayco Cup starts tomorrow

BACOLOD CITY SHEGNDALES ITS PASSION for basketball when the Pasi NBA (Negros Basketball Association) Gov. Isidro Zayco Invitational Cup opens tomorrow at the Bacolod Tennis Court.

Eight teams, including non-ladies Tied Dic, Is, will compete in the event organized by the NBA headed by sportsman Isidro Zayco.

Also entered are Silay Negros University Mustangs, Cadiz City Hilagaans, La Carlota City, Pamplona Bulls of former Sen. John Osmena, Silay City and Negros Occ. Province.

Tied Bulls of businessman Tito Lopez will be led by 1998 PBA MVP Romulo Bustamante, Stefano Sanyocco and Leo Rodong. It will tangle with NNU at 4:30 p.m. following the 3 p.m. opener between Cadiz and La Carlota.

Inaugural ceremonies start at 1:30 p.m. with the NNU glee club performing Lupang Hinirang and Bacolod City Mayor Evelio "Bing" Leonardia delivering the opening remarks.

Boy Bustillo will introduce Gov. Zayco while Masonga skipper Sergie Negrera will lead the oath of sportsmanship. The best undefeated team and the best team will then be announced by the Gov.

Johnny Ilo will declare the tourney open followed by the ceremonial toss to be headed by Gov. Zayco, who will be assisted by Vice Gov. Dino Fals, Mayor Leonardia, Silay Mayor Jose Ghanedhana, Cadiz Mayor Salvador Escalante, Hilagaan Mayor Hermilo Aguilar and La Carlota Mayor Enrico Hernando.

AIG PhilAm Bank marks partnership with Ford Group Philippines with a round of Golf

AIG Philam Savings Bank will be hosting today the 1st Orchid Cup at the Sta Elena Golf Club in Sta. Rosa, Laguna. The invitational golf tournament willofficially launch the Bank's partnership with Ford Group Philippines (FGP).following the recent acquisition of Ford Credit International, Inc.'s majority stake in Primus Finance & Leasing, Inc. (Primus) by AIG Philtro Bank and the Philippine American Life and General Insurance Company (Philamlife). The event will be attended by Ford and Mazda dealer principals.

AIG Philam Bank president & CEO, Joven Reyes, disclosed that the tournament officially kicks off the special auto loan marketing programs that the Bank will

implement in collaboration with dealers of FGP. He added that the timing of the event was an opportune way to renew and strengthen the Bank's ties with FGP dealers.

Said Reyes: "We are positioning ourselves to take the lead in consumer financing. And is why we are aggressively marketing our auto loan and other consumer products. I am delighted that we have the support of Ford and Mazda dealers, who have been our valued business partners."

"Our dealer partners and friends will be at the forefront of marketing the Bank's auto loan products," said Raffy Dimalanta, head of the Bank's auto loan department. "They have had regular sales and our loan offering will definitely complement their efforts. It's a strong synergy".

The 1st Orchid Cup will commence at 7:00 am. Participants will then join FGP President Rob Baker and AIG PhilAm Bank President Joven Reyes who will lead the tee off at 7:30 am. AIG Philam Bank will also be hosting a get together lunch, followed by a program where trophies and prizes will be awarded to the tournament winners.

AIG PhilAm Savings Bank is a member of American International Group, Inc. (AIG). AIG, a world leader in insurance and financial services, is the leading international insurance organization with operations in more than 130 countries and jurisdictions. AIG companies serve commercial, institutional and individual customers through the most extensive worldwide property-casualty and life insurance networks of any insurer. In addition, AIG companies are leading providers of retirement services, financial services and asset management around the world. AIG's common stock is listed on the New York Stock Exchange, as well as the stock exchanges in Ireland and Tokyo.

Purse stalls Pacquiao-Hoya go

By Marc Anthony Reyes

NO PROBLEM WITH THE WEIGHT limit. Not even the knockout power.

It appears that the final stumbling block in the mega-fight between Oscar De La Hoya and Manny Pacquiao is—what else—money.

The two warring superstars just couldn't agree how to split the expected multimillion-dollar revenue for the fight, the ESPN reported via Internet yesterday.

Representatives from both camps talked for hours then two hours Wednesday night in Los Angeles and came out of it saying the same thing—both fighters must agree to give something to make the fight push through.

HBO has reportedly blocked off Dec. 6 specifically for the extra-ordinary match-up between De La Hoya, who will be making his first appearance in the ring, and the pound-for-pound king who is also the WBO welterweight champion.

The source appeared to be a done deal...the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

"I think what it will take is for Manny to give and for Oscar to give to get a deal done," said Golden Boy Promotions CEO Richard Schaefer. "That's pretty much what it is. But the fact that we had a one-on-one phone meeting is obviously a good sign. If it had been a five-minute meeting, it would indicate the gaps are too big."

Top Rank's Bob Arum, who handles things for the Filipino team, said pretty much the same thing as he vowed to talk to Pacquiao soon after he finishes his Hall-beating chores for Team Philippines in the Beijing Olympics.

"There will have to be movement on both sides. Hopefully, there will be movement. We want to make a deal, Richard said I. Whether it can be made or not, I don't know. It will take give and take on both sides, like in any negotiation," the ESPN quoted Arum as saying.

But like any other negotiation, things got bumps when money matters were taken up.

"I can say without any question, some of this will be a problem, weight or gloves," Arum said. "We are working reasonably on the split."

Pacquiao got $3 million from his June victory over David Diaz, but the figure was estimated to be a lot bigger than officially disclosed as he also got undisclosed amount from the HBO pay-per-view.

Julio Heras's paycheck, on the other hand, reportedly went up to barely at $35 million when he lost the WBC super welterweight crown to Floyd Mayweather Jr. last year.

Just the same, both camps appeared headed for an agreement that the fight would be at 147 lb.

MANNY Pacquiao

RP Sr League softbelles eye semis

By Cedelf F. Tupas

THE PHILIPPINES EDGED FIJI 4 overall last slot in the 2008 Senior League girls' 14-16 Softball World Series against 10-Southwest in Boyle Lower Sussex, Delaware.

A victory by the team from Bacolod City against the squad from Nabuganpay, New Mexico, will match the Philippines' final foe opponent in this event four years ago.

That RP squad went on to place third after losing to eventual champion Latin America in the semis.

The Filipino batters go into the game on a two-game win-loss, prevailing over Tri-Islands, 10-1, and forfeiting, 2-1, after dropping their first game against US Central, 1-16.

US Central has already sealed the top spot in Pool A with a 4-0 record, followed by the Philippines with a 2-1 slate and US Southwest at 1-2.

The Filipinos are hoping for the appearance of pitcher Annalie Bautista, who missed the first three games because of the delay in the release of her US visa. Sonia Benjamin, Julie Maria Moyes and more

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BUSINESS

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Excellence in Connection
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MARIANA AIR

Gross int'l reserves hit $36.9B in July

IN THIS ISSUE

Economic growth said to fall below '08 target /B8

Shares close down

SHARE PRICES FELL for the day closed 0.5 percent lower on profit taking after the market snagged its biggest single-day gain Wednesday, dealers said. The Philippine Stock

SHARES /B

By Dara C. Duntao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS' FOREIGN exchange reserves at the end of July reached a record $36.9 billion.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. yesterday said that the end-July gross international reserves (GIR) were $200 million higher than that of the previous month.

Also, July's reserves were well within the central bank's GIR year-end forecast of $33 to $35 billion.

The central bank's income from its investments abroad, as well as remittances presently dispatched by the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp., mainly accounted for the growth in foreign exchange reserves, Tetangco said.

The GIR is a key indicator of a country's ability to cover the foreign exchange requirements of its economy. It can

GROSS /B

Expect more from your drive.

Drive your Dream

YOU ONLY HAVE THIS AUGUST

TO GET 1 YEAR FREE INSURANCE ON YOUR CAR LOAN FROM BPI FAMILY SAVINGS BANK

With the rising cost of imported gas, you have to find ways to save and get the best deals for your money.

Today, buying a car means truly choosing wisely. You have to consider what type of car would fit your daily requirements, which car dealer to get it from, and how to get the best deals on financing and even car insurance. The right choices can save you money and take you farther with fewer liters of fuel.

Here are some tips to help you save so you can spend on other things.

Choose a fuel-efficient vehicle.

Keep in mind that the heavier it is to get the vehicle moving, the less efficient it is. A heavy vehicle guzzles more gas than its smaller counterpart. But before you opt for the lowest in the market, consider the size of your family and the kind of roads the vehicle will drive. For example, if you have a business and would need to make deliveries, you may need a bigger vehicle, like a pick-up truck.

An aerodynamic vehicle cuts through the air with minimal drag and gets more kilometers per liter. So if you're into daily rip-side surfing on your roof, think twice before getting a roof rack.

And if it runs more than it shines in your area, you might also want to give up the sunroof. Even if we roll down or have less wind resistance get you more miles. Radial tires with advanced tread pattern, smaller rims and narrow width are good characteristics for fuel efficiency.

Also, if you can expertly distinguish an engine's transmission, it saves more fuel than an automatic. Traveling on hilly roads? Choose an AWD or an all-wheel drive over a 4WD.

Choose the right fuel.

Diesel delivers as much as 25% more mileage than gasoline, gives off less carbon dioxide but more toxic gases. Biodiesel gives the same mileage with a less similar effect on the environment. LPG gets the most mileage on Philippine roads and while the initial cost to convert your engine is quite high, it pays off in about a year.

Drive to save.

Hard braking on a red light and hard accelerator increase fuel consumption by 40%. Decelerate smoothly by releasing the gas pedal in time, leaving the car in gear. After acceleration, shift up to higher gear as soon as possible. Maintain a steady speed. 90 kph is best as it improves your gas mileage by as much as 75% compared to driving at 100 kph. Anticipate traffic flow so you can smoothly change your speed.

Although our traffic situation often tests your engine's endurance, you can plan your trip to avoid it. Try alternative routes that keep you cruising steadily.

More than just saving fuel.

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BPI FAMILY SAVINGS BANK

157 Years

Go for 'sustainable' mining, IFC urges firms

Companies should get 'social license' to do business

By Amy R. Remo

INTERNATIONAL FINANCE CORP. has urged firms to take a sustainable approach to mining to avoid "stakeholder and legacy" issues, which have hampered some of the major projects in the country.

At the 2008 Sustainable Mining Exploration and Investment conference yesterday, IFC resident representative for the Philippines Jesse O. Ang said that a sustainable approach to mining has become a business imperative.

In his presentation, Ang explained that for about 20 to 40 years, mining firms are "gonna to remove and improve[mine] sites," and thus, a social license to operate can and will affect a company's bottom line.

"To ensure long-term success, mining operations must be transparent, transparent and equipped with qualified human resources," he said.

A member of the World Bank Group, IFC provides finance and advice for private sector ventures in developing countries.

As of June 30 this year, IFC's mining portfolio reached $625 million.

According to Ang, among the common "symptoms"—which are avoidable with good planning—are issues on land claims, local vendor pressures, lack of alternative employment and area closure anxiety.

These symptoms are expected to impact heavily on firms in the form of "costly legal proceedings, [and]time[and] resource consuming, security violations, actions striking, interrupted operations and reputational risk."

In the Philippines, some mining operations were halted by opposition from Church, civil groups and nongovernment organizations.

There were also times when operations were stopped due to the mining firms' own negligence.

Also causing delay are attacks by rebel groups.

Last month, rebel groups were said to have attacked Intex Phi.'s planned $3-billion Tampakan copper-gold mine in South Cotabato.

Earlier, the Tampakan mine was hit by groups who burned camp buildings in the area site.

"Systematic planning and best practices can prevent these issues," he said.

Despite setbacks and delays, the Philippine government remains bullish on the local mining sector, as it expects to raise to $7.7 billion in public and investment[in the area now and 2011 from 1A few existing mineral development projects.

Ang added that local stakeholder planning should be held early and includes outside key investors such as baseline analyses and documentation, which mining firms can use as evidence in the face of critics.

Mining firms should also include at the early stages of exploration and operation community consultations and participatory processes to ensure community economic and future local ownership of all activities.

He added that land acquisition through best practices should also be implemented to avoid costly land claims.

It is also crucial to "prime" the contractor to mitigate the negative social impact of construction and local vendor pressures.

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Smuggling and the Senate

By Ernesto M. Ordóñez

COMMENTARY

TWO DAYS AGO, AT THE SENATE hearing chaired jointly by Senators Francis Escudero of the committee on ways and means and Senator Juan Ponce Enrile of the committee on finance, the Senate showed itself to be a strong ally in the fight against smuggling.

Leaders of the Alyansa Agrikultura (AA), a farmer-fisherfolk coalition of 42 federations and organizations representing all major agricultural sectors, attended the hearing to see if they would once again be disappointed.

They had expressed this dismay when the previous Senate failed to pass the anti-smuggling bill patiently authored by Congressman Erin Tañada that had already been approved by the House of Representatives. The Senate claimed lack of time and more important priorities.

With the new Congress, we are back to square one, and we have to again go through the Congressional approval process.

However, what happened during the recent Senate hearing gave both encouragement and hope that this time, the Senate would be at the forefront of anti-smuggling efforts.

Key document

The main subject of the hearing was the smuggling of agricultural products. A key document identified to help stop this smuggling is the Annual Foreign Situation (AFM). The AFM lists the products imported, the ship used, and the time of arrival. It is given to the Bureau of Customs (BOC) prior to an imported shipment's arrival.

Since only BOC had access to all these AFMs, there was no check and balance system. Thus, if an AFM listed agricultural products that had no import permits, these products could be easily smuggled without the knowledge of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

This smuggling would have three disastrous consequences: 1) loss of jobs; 2) foregone taxes; and 3) endangered economic health because of the lack of phytosanitary clearances.

In 2003, the DA had access to AFMs. But with the abolition of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Anti-smuggling (Coast), where the AA representated the agricultural private sector, this DA access was discontinued.

On June 13, after three years and 10 months, Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, with the support of BOC Commissioner Napoleon Morales and Assistant Commissioner Alexander Arevalo, ordered BOC to implement a system that would give DA access to the AFM.

Since then, allegations have been made that there are anomalies in the leaked critical information. First, they did not include all the AFMs. Second, many of the AFMs given them did not include all the listed products. This missing data provide the opportunity for more smuggling. These allegations are cause for investigation to determine whether they are valid or not.

Senate intervention

During the hearing, Enrile demonstrated his patriotic concern by inquiring about the details of the BOC procedures in giving DA access to the AFMs. In true statesmanlike fashion, Escudero built on the findings unearthed by Enrile and recommended a solution that would ensure the completeness of the AFM data given to DA.

Before the hearing, the shipowning and importer boards would give the AFMs only to the BOC. The BOC would then transfer that information to dokumar they would then forward to the DA. DA officials said that some important AFM data they knew about were not included in these dokumars.

This non-inclusion could be accentuated. But whether intentional or not, the incomplete data provide the opportunity for smuggling because DA has no knowledge of these missing products.

To address this, Escudero proposed that the shipping companies provide the AFMs simultaneously to both BOC and DA. There could then be no opportunity for BOC to omit critical data.

Maximiano Cruz, president of the Association of International Shipping Lines, responded positively to this proposal. Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, who has consistently supported the Art. anti-smuggling committee, likewise supported this suggestion.

Recommendation

While AFM data, though possibly incomplete, have been given by BOC to the DA since June 16, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has yet to receive a copy.

It was stated that BOC first cancels a MOA on this arrangement between BOC and DTI. But when DTI presented an already signed earlier MOA, which the DTI legal officers said was sufficient, BOC required a new MOA. It is supposed that BOC help DTI easily the MOA that the BOC desires, or else some will convince thinking that the BOC is intentionally making it difficult for DTI to have AFM access.

At the same time, the shipping lines should give the AFMs not only to DA but also to DTI. Instances are known in the past when DTI accredited importers no longer find jobs to the lines, they will look for industry jobs which may not be there because of rampant smuggling.

In August 2004, the AA asked for AFM access to be restored for DA. Exactly four long years later, this access is being restored, with the hope we now a strong ally in the anti-smuggling campaign.

It is hoped that the Senate will hereafter become the scourge of the smugglers who are destroying our nation.

(The author is chair of Agrinetwork, former secretary for presidential flagship programs and projects, and former undersecretary for Agriculture and Trade and Industry. For inquiries and suggestions, e-mail agrinetwork@yahoo.com or telefax (02) 4522112.)

PCA expects coconut industry to get back on growth path

Recovery seen despite typhoon, pest damage

THE PHILIPPINE COCONUT AUthority remains confident that the coconut output will increase this year despite the damage caused by typhoons and the coconut leaf beetle.

PCA said it expects coconut production to expand this year by about 9 percent to 2.366 million tons in copra terms, from last year's 2.337 million tons.

This projection is higher than the government's initial production estimate of 2.43 million tons.

The P40-billion coconut industry is still expecting bush in six to ten after the devastation caused by typhoons, particularly Reed, which was last local to since 2006.

In the same year, an invasive beetle (Brontispa longissima gestro) began infesting coconut trees, damaging seedlings and mature coconut palms.

In a briefing, Carlos Carpio, PCA deputy administrator for research, development and extension branch, said that there was a good chance that production targets would be met due to good weather and the recovery of the Bicol region's coconut industry.

He said that damage caused by Typhoon "Frank" in Region 6 and 8 can be quickly recovered.

"Damage in these regions was only slight to moderate, which means that [production] can be recovered within three months," he said.

Meanwhile, Carpio said that the invasive coconut hispine beetle managed to submit only 700,000 cases or less than 1 percent of the country's 520 million coconut trees.

This means that the beetle infestation will not have a significant impact on this year's production, add

ed in the fact that the government has been treating infested trees since last year.

In 2007, the DA bankrolled a P50-million program to eradicate the Brontispa beetle.

The PCA, for its part, has been treating the coconut trees in 79 coconut production provinces through insecticides and vaccines.

Carpio noted, however, that the coconut industry would not get back to its 2005 production level until next year at the earliest.

In 2005, coconut production reached more than 2.6 million metric tons.

As the industry recovers, the PCA also expects exports of coconut products to bounce back this year to 1.916 million metric tons in copra terms, up 12.2 percent from last year's 1.707 million tons.

Domestic consumption is likewise expected to grow by 4 percent to 650,000 tons, from last year's 625,000 tons. Amy R. Remo

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The Philippine American Life and General Insurance Company (Philamlife), the country's leading life insurer, had another record year in 2007, with gross premiums reaching P22.7 billion, a 15.9% increase compared to 2006.

The company reported that its life insurance operations generated P7.4 billion in new business, growing a strong 57.6% compared to the previous year.

Commenting on the company's 2007 performance, AIG Country Head and Philamlife President and CEO Jose L. Cuisia, Jr. said: "Sales of our single premium variable life products surged, fueled by aggressive agency and marketing initiatives, and a strong market preference for investment-type products. Our financial strength and stability make us the wise choice for potential investors. In 2007, we had consolidated assets of P170.0 billion and stockholders' equity of P49.5 billion. Investment income increased 3.1% to P9.4 billion. Total revenues amounted to P36.7 billion, 14.0% higher than the previous year. Net income adjusted for foreign exchange was P4.8 billion, a 15.8% increase versus the previous year's P4.1 billion. Pre-tax income was P2.8 billion in 2007."

Philamlife Receives 5th Platinum Trusted Brand Award

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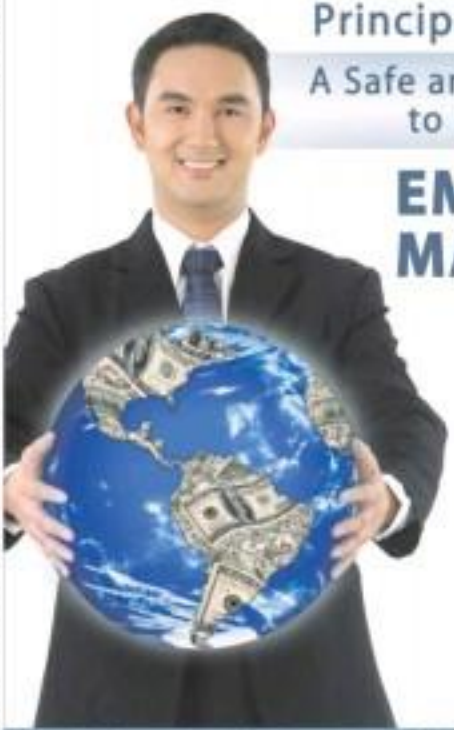

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Opportunism in bad times

corporate securities info

Head of Valderrama

THE MONTH OF AUGUST BRINGS mixed feelings to a lot of people.

For those with ample financial resources, it's a prelude to the "ber" months and you know what that leads to. Those who are not similarly situated look at the coming holiday season with apprehension.

In these times of soaring food prices and double digit inflation, fixed income earners and retirees have no choice but limit their expenses to the minimum.

While declaring the control of inflationary spillover and meltdown, whatever scenario it felt it spend for basic food necessities.

It's goodbye (hopefully, temporarily) to occasional restaurant outings, shopping mall trips and the small luxuries that help boost the consciousness of daily living.

To mitigate the adverse effects of inflation, those who have savings or retirement funds put their money in financial schemes that promise yields or interests higher than those given by banks.

Unfortunately, in the desire to maximize the value of their money, these people sometimes fall victim to scam artists who exploit their desire to get as much return on their investments as soon as possible with the least effort.

There's nothing wrong with that. It's human nature. But the problem is, it tends to make the people concerned to be less cautious and vigilant in their actions.

Investment scam

With constant of high returns, scores of Filipinos experiencing a cross-section of our social structure have been bilked millions of pesos in various investment scams.

The latest to hit the country involves Performance Investment Products Corp. which were able to solicit millions of dollars from overseas Filipino (for supposed investments in foreign currencies.

When the fraud unraveled, PIPC's president, Singaporean businessman Michael Lowe, disappeared and his local business partners were left to face the music alone.

The criminal complaints for selling unregistered securities filed against PIPC officers and promoters are now pending in court.

Except for some minor changes, the script or modus operandi of investment scams has not changed.

Glossy promotional brochures, luxuriously decorated offices and smart looking personnel are used to attract prospective victims.

The video pitch for investors more effective if a relative, classmate or friend of the targeted investor vouches for the "integrity" and reliability of the investment promoters.

When the victim falls for the ploy and puts in his initial investment, he is given postdated checks that purportedly represent advance payment of interest on his investment.

To strengthen the victim's trust in the project, the scam artists invite him to gatherings of fellow investors in five-star hotels that are characterized by good food, expensive wine and flamboyant material shows.

And on his way out of the party, he gets an expensive freebie or personal gift as a token of appreciation for taking time to meet his fellow investors and hoping he "sells" in the investment scheme.

Elated by the ego-boosting attention given him, when a relative is to convince his investment money, the victim does not undertake more thorough check before signing another check for a bigger investment.

The cycle of deception continues until the bubble bursts. The evil geniuses then move on to another place where they can start all over again.

Some prominent (or so-called) of age, subscribers to financial fraud-ing in choosing their targets.

The victim's place of residence—First World or Third World countries—does not make any difference. Everyone is considered fair game.

Ponzi scheme

In the United States, John Heath, 84, was sentenced and sentenced to 20 years in prison last February for an investment scheme that defrauded 3,000 people, mostly elderly, of about $170 million.

Heath, who is wheelchair bound, was ruthless in the operation of his scam and another person a Ponzi scheme dating back to the early 1980s that solicited investments from "new" investors to pay the interests due on the investments made by earlier investors.

He told his victims that their money was being invested in fixed income investments that had little or no risk. And they believed him.

The parents of a senior citizen calling on a rehabilitation center for fellow elderly to entrust their money to him so they can get the opportunity to earn additional money for their retirement life must have been very convincing.

He skillfully exploited the sense of insecurity of men and women who only had their retirement benefits to sustain them for the last years of their lives.

After two decades, justice finally caught up with him.

Heath was found guilty of 32 counts of fraud, one of false representation, grand theft and theft from the elderly. He was also ordered to reimburse the $117 million that was directly connected with him.

The judge handed down the lengthy prison sentence despite the plea of Heath's children for leniency on account of his old age and failing health.

Word of advice to people who may be tempted to invest in an MMDA sidewalk: If something is too good to be true, it usually is.

Investigate and ask around first before you let go of your hard-earned money.

(Ric Arellano, please write to (askricksa@inquirer.com.ph)

$100M needed to reopen Cadlao oil field

By Abigail L. Ho

AT LEAST $100 MILLION IS NEEDED to re-activate the Cadlao oil field in the Northern Palawan shelf, which last saw production in 1995.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, Oriental Petroleum and Minerals Corp. accounting manager Ma. Alona Lacuna said budgetary constraints prompted the company to give up its stake in the Cadlao oil field.

"The company entered into a sale and purchase agreement involving its Cadlao oil field interest with Alcorn Petroleum Philippines Ltd., to maximize such asset without incurring the associated risks and costs of developing Cadlao," she said.

The reactivation of the Cadlao field, Lacuna said, was estimated to cost more than $100 million.

"At OPMI does not have the resources to undertake the re-activation up its own, so we decided to sell our interests to an entity set for later but the financial and technical ability to do so," she added.

Despite the sale, she said OPMI would still be able to benefit from the crude oil from Cadlao, since production resumes, without incurring any capital risks and costs.

At this point, proceeds from the

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Nido thinks big after Galoc oilfield

BANGKOK—NIDO PETROleum will target bigger hydrocarbon finds in Philippine deep waters and onshore, quick-to-develop projects in Southeast Asia, the company president and CEO J.T. Ferdinand de Dios said.

Nido has focused on the under-explored Philippines, and is negotiating farm-in deals for the Galoc oil field within the month after a series of delays.

"Nido is a cash-generative. But what I want is to discover a large field," De Dios said on the sidelines of the Asian Business Council Forum 2008.

Galoc, which will raise the Philippines' oil output by some 7% percent, will produce about 22,000 barrels per day (bpd) once it starts up, De Dios said.

Few if any Nido-triggered producing asset in the Philippines. The company already produces small volumes from the Nido and Matinloc fields.

Nido holds a non-operating 22.29-per-cent stake in Galoc, while its offshore in the North West Palawan basin.

The commercial decision to develop the field was taken when crude prices were at $65 a barrel. De Dios said, banking a more than healthy margin on the crude round at $125 yesterday.

He would not be drawn on an exact starting date for Galoc after the field has been plagued with a series of technical problems.

The latest was encountering the Floating Production Storage and Offloading system (FPSO) after it was discovered in late June about of sync.

A support vessel will arrive next week to repair a section of the risers De Dios said.

"The oil is there. I am optimistic that it will start producing sooner rather than later," he said.

Nido has started looking for partners to develop prospects and oilfields prospects in the country and, at the same time, is scouting the region for small projects.

It is expected to farm out some of its stakes to service contracts SC 54, SC 58 and SC 63 and has received several farm-in requirements.

"We are managing ourselves, and also risk by contracting that we have the best partners to help us. We want to maximize our chances of success," De Dios said.

Nido is also looking for smaller projects in the Philippines, said through the region.

"We are not necessarily participating in rounds. Rounds are for majors/mine majors. We are looking for marginal fields that we can develop into production, into the Philippines and outside," De Dios said. Reuters

Lopez firms selling toll road business to Metro Pacific

P12.2 billion for 99.84 percent ownership of FPII

By Elizabeth Sanchez Lazaro

FIRST PHILIPPINE HOLDINGS Corp. and parent firm Lopez Holdings Corp. built roads allied by the Lopez clan, have decided to sell their combined stake in First Philippine Infrastructure Inc. (FPII) to Metro Pacific Investment Corp. for P12.2 billion.

FPII—which is 51 percent and 49 percent owned by First Philippine and Beacon, respectively—owns 67.1 percent of Manila North Tollways Corp. (MNTC) and 46 percent of Cebu-Mactan Bridge Corp. (TMC).

Through a Supplemental Toll Operations Agreement, MNTC was granted a concession to finance, design, construct, operate and maintain the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX).

TMC, for its part, operates and maintains the NLEX.

For the offer of P12.2 billion, MPIC will get 99.84 percent of FPII.

MPIC is the local flagship firm of Hong Kong's First Pacific Co. Ltd., which sees investors in real estate and utility services.

A share purchase agreement is now being negotiated by the parties. Once consummated, First Holdings will receive P6.2 billion from the sale while the rest will go to Beacon.

Macquarie Capital (Singapore) Pte. Ltd. served as exclusive financial adviser to Beacon and First Holdings.

Beacon earlier said it wanted to sell a third of its stake in North Luzon Expressway operator MNTC for more than $100 million to help repay dollar debt.

In the meantime, MPIC said it planned to conduct a tender offer for FPII shares held by the public.

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3 groups seen vying for Iligan diesel plant

By Abigail L. Ho

THE 114-MEGAWATT (MW) Pagbilao 3 and 4 diesel fired power plant complex in Pagbilao, Quezon, which will be bid out on Oct. 15, has attracted the interest of three potential bidders.

According to Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp., three local groups are expected to put their names in the ring.

Their groups are now doing the due process on the Iligan generation facilities, PSALM said in a statement. The agency, however, refused to identify the prospective bidders.

They will have until Oct. 6 to complete their due diligence. The submission of the bids was set for Oct. 15.

The Iligan 1 and 2 plants, both commissioned in 1999, are located in Dalip pags, Iligan City, around 74 kilometers southwest of Cagayan de Oro City.

The generation facility now has a number 2 and oldest dark.

The plants' 114-MW capacity, however, would not count in the computation of the 70-percent privatization threshold required for the implementation of retail competition and open access scheme.

PRULINK — PRU LIFE UK

Investments of Prulink Life Insurance Contracts	Current Unit Price (August 7, 2008)	Last Unit Price (July 24, 2008)
Bond Fund - Peso	1.0000	1.0000
Managed Fund - Peso	1.1749	1.1900
Equity Fund - Peso	0.7787	0.7900
Equity Fund - Plus - Peso	0.6700	0.6800
Bond Fund - US Dollar	1.4874	1.4900

DFNN to team up with Japanese firm

DYNERSPHERE FINANCIAL NETWORK INC. (DFNN) is planning a joint venture deal with Asian Elite Club Co., a Japanese firm that provides luxury tours to high-end Malcolmed Chinese and European clients, to take advantage of the growth in leisure and hospitality gaming in Asia.

DFNN said its board had approved the execution of a memorandum of understanding with Asian Elite Club on Sept. 1.

The MOU provides for the creation of a joint venture that will offer high-end leisure and leisure activities in Japan, the Philippines, Singapore and eventually other Asian destinations in its cluster.

The joint venture will also look for strategic alliances with other registered gaming establishments, high-end resort operators, and providers of lifestyle services and entertainment.

The joint venture will complement DFNN's other subsidiary, Double Gaming Investments Pte. Ltd., whose clients' operations include leisure and gaming entertainment facilities in three countries. Elizabeth Sanchez Lazaro

Gov't earmarks ₱9B in VAT earnings for seed program

By Jose B. Reyes

THE GOVERNMENT WILL EARMARK SOME P9 billion for the national seed program over the next two years, mainly to increase seed production by farmers, the Department of Agriculture said.

In a statement, the DA said the amount would come from earnings from the 12-percent value-added tax on oil products.

For the current wet planting season, the DA had allocated P1.88 billion for the seed subsidy program, covering 470,000 bags of hybrid seeds, 1.16 million bags of certified seeds and 400,000 bags of good, quality seeds.

Hybrid seeds are expected to yield an average of 150 cavans per hectare, certified seeds, 90 to 110 cavans, and good, quality seeds, 90 to 100 cavans.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap said that for the July-December planting season, which will cover 1.09 million hectares of land, the DA is set to increase its distribution of seed subsidies to farmers so they can plant hybrid seeds to some 300,000 hectares and certified seeds in 1.3 million hectares.

He said an equivalent of 91,500 would be given to cover farmer-planting hybrid seeds and P1.2B for those planting certified seeds.

The DA said higher farm spending by the government has raised palay production by an annual average of 4.07 percent from 2001 to 2007, raising the national rice sufficiency level from 87 percent to 2000 to almost 93 percent this year.

In the meantime, Land Bank of the Philippines said it was ready to provide P7 billion in microfinance loans to farmers to increase their production.

Aside from the subsidy, the DA has also stepped up its collaboration with the International Rice Research Institute (Irri) on the development of high-yielding rice varieties that are flood tolerant, drought-resistant and disease-tolerant.

Irri scientists earlier briefed President Macapagal-Arroyo on these new inventions and disease-tolerant seed varieties during her recent visit to Irri.

Statement of Annual Obligations as of December 31, 2007

ADMITTED ASSETS	
Bonds	P 1,166,146,674.17
Stocks	342,295,000.00
Mutual Funds	799,691,787.49
Mortgage Loans	28,992,432.12
Policy Loans	3,840,000.00
Equity Fund	1,000,000.00
Other Investments	44,100,000.00
Cash on Hand and in Banks	103,727,200.67
Premiums Receivable	114,845,000.00
Reinsurance Ceding Fees from Ceding Companies	12,812,000.00
Reinsurance Recoverable on Losses	104,192,100.00
Due from Reinsurers for Ceding Companies	1,000,000.00
Other Reinsurance Accounts Receivable	1,000,000.00
Accrued Investment Income	43,500,000.00
Other Admitted Assets	11,111,000.00
TOTAL ADMITTED ASSETS	P 2,800,000,192.45
LIABILITIES	
Current and Claims Payable	P 107,000,000.00
Reserve for Unearned Premiums	340,000,000.00
Commissions and Reserves	45,000,000.00
Premiums Due to Reinsurers	100,000,000.00
Premiums Reserve Withheld for Reinsurers	10,000,000.00
Other Reinsurance Accounts Payable	40,000.00
Accrued Expenses	40,000,000.00
Taxes Payable	100,000,000.00
Insurance Payable	100,000,000.00
Other Liabilities	100,000,000.00
Total Liabilities	P 1,000,000,000.00
STOCKHOLDERS' EQUITY	
Capital Stock Paid-up	P 500,000,000.00
Contributed Surplus	100,000,000.00
Contributed Surplus	100,000,000.00
Revaluation Reserve-Bonds	100,000,000.00
Revaluation Reserve-Foreign Exchange	100,000,000.00
Retained Earnings	100,000,000.00
Total Stockholders' Equity	P 1,800,000,000.00
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND STOCKHOLDERS' EQUITY	P 2,800,000,000.00

$100M needed to reopen . . .

From page B1

make sale, which OPMC did not disclose, had not been earmarked for any specific purpose, she said.

OPMC needs over-representation of the Gaisano till block from the Philodrill Corp.

Last year, Edade Benedicto and Ventanilla engineered investors in forming to tie the Galoc oil field, in a bid to re-activate it.

Rizal and Venturoll already held the 44.94-percent stake of Phoenix Energy Corp. in the oil block, following a sale agreement forged in the second half of 2007.

The two companies had also offered to buy out the 4.95-percent ownership (worth $1.5 million) in the Galoc field that PNOC-EC recently shared with Philex Mining Corp. and Team Asia Oil and Energy Development Corp.

Shares close down

From page B1

Its benchmark composite index shed 32.57 points to 2,930.64. The all-share index gained 0.23 points to 1,695.81. A total of 2.11 billion shares worth P2.2 billion (US$51.9 million) changed hands. Gainers led losers, 94 to 88, while 55 issues were unchanged.

Regina Capital analyst Gamer Tan said the market was expected to consolidate in the coming sessions after finishing at a two-month high Wednesday.

"The market is taking a breather," Tan told the Dow Jones Newswires. "A recent dollar slide investors the opportunity to evaluate their positions." AFP

Gross int'l reserves . . .

From page B1

ness of the central bank's gross foreign currency holdings, gold reserves, foreign investments and special drawing rights from the International Monetary Fund.

However, the inflow was partly offset by outflows arising mainly from payments of maturing foreign exchange obligations of the government and the central bank, Tetangco said.

Since March this year, the BSP had been dumping $20 dollars a day spot foreign exchange market to temper the peso's sharp fall against the greenback due to investors' concerns over soaring oil prices and the spillover impact on domestic inflation.

But the peso started to recover when the central bank lashed up its overnight borrowing rate by half a percentage point to 5.5% Tuesday—its first since 2006.

"The current GIR can cover six months of imports of goods and payments of services and income," Tetangco said, adding that the reserves were also equivalent to 3.2 times the country's short-term external debt based on original maturity and three times based on residual maturity.

Short-term debt based on residual maturity refers to the outstanding external debt with original maturity of one year or less, plus principal payments on medium- and long-term loans of the public and private sectors falling due within the next 12 months.

Also, total NIR (net of the country's GIR is denominated in US dollars), about 8 percent is in yuan, while 2.5 percent is in Japanese yen. About $4 billion is in the form of gold reserves.

Including about $4.2 billion worth of foreign exchange stock currently locked up in monetary swaps not yet booked as part of the GIR, the country's official reserves is about $41.2 billion, lower than the peak of nearly $50 billion seen in the first two months of the year. With a report from Reuters

CASIO CALCULATORS
RETAIL ASSISTANT

WESTERN
GLOBALTRONICS
National Book Store
SHOWISE

BUSINESS

Economic growth said to fall below '08 target

By Michelle V. Rosca

THE GOVERNMENT'S TIGHT monetary policy and erratic spending in the first half are seen to take their toll on the economy.

A presidential adviser went so far as to predict a shortfall in the official growth target for 2008.

Joey Salceda, Albay governor and economic adviser to President Macapagal-Arroyo, said the economy would likely expand by only 5.4 or 5.5 percent this year compared with the goal of between 5.7 and 6.6 percent.

"The economy is being triangled by a hike in interest rates on one hand, and significant underspending on the other," Salceda told reporters.

Although the Arroyo administration vowed to beef up spending this year to keep the economy afloat amid a global slowdown, Salceda said, fiscal figures in the first half told otherwise.

The government spent P686 billion and posted a budget deficit of P48 billion in the first six months. The deficit was lower than the P66 billion ceiling set under the revised fiscal program for the year. The smaller deficit was a result of the lower-than-programmed spending, as revenue stayed a little above goal.

Economic managers said underspending in the first half resulted from the failure of some government agencies to maximize their respective budgets. They partly blamed tedious procedures as required by the procurement law.

But Salceda said fiscal authorities were deliberately keeping expenditures below the programmed level so that the government could keep its deficit small and gain the favor of credit-rating firms.

The official said controlling spending was a good thing pulling but only if the economy were not threatened by a downturn.

With high inflation and weak global demand, which adversely affects the country's exports, the economy will need a boost from public spending, he said.

Salceda, however, expressed confidence that the Arroyo administration would resume its spending habits next year. The president's branch earlier proposed a P1.44-trillion national budget for 2009, higher by P161 billion than this year's official budget of P1.2-trillion.

If spending for 2009 is maintained, he said, it would be the first time in six years that growth in expenditure would exceed nominal growth of the economy.

PSBank Peso Time Deposit

Deposit Amount	Interest Rates*			
In Pesos	30 Days	90 Days	180 Days	1 year
100,000 - 499,999	3.750	3.750	3.875	4.250
500,000 - 999,999	4.000	4.000	4.125	4.500
1.0MM - 4.99MM	4.750	4.750	4.875	5.250
5.0MM and up	5.000	5.000	5.125	5.500

Manage your account online via PSBank Remote Banking. Open a time deposit now in any of 142 branches nationwide.

Pall Mall pulled out of RP market

BRITISH AMERICAN TOBACCO (BAT) has pulled out Pall Mall from the Philippine market after learning that the government has slapped the highest excise tax rate on the brand.

"There is no sense in continuing to sell the brand if there is no level playing field in the market," Antony Pilot, BAT general manager, yesterday told reporters.

Maintaining Pall Mall in the market would only add to BAT's losses in the Philippines, he added. At the end of a long drawn-out tax battle, BAT failed to secure a favorable ruling from the Department of Finance.

BAT is also the maker of Lucky Strike, Dunhill and Vogue cigarette brands.

In February, the DOF sided with the Bureau of Internal Revenue and ruled cigarette manufacturers when it announced that Pall Mall should be slapped the highest excise tax rate of P20 a pack.

That decision was a reversal of the DOF's initial ruling that Pall Mall should only be taxed P6.74 a pack.

The initial DOF ruling was based on the results of a market survey, which determined that Pall Mall was a medium-priced cigarette and that its net retail price should range between P5.00 and P6.50 a pack. Under Republic Act 9334, commonly known as the Sin Tax Law of 2005, medium-priced cigarettes should be slapped a tax rate of P6.74 a pack.

But the BIR, managed to persuade the DOF that Pall Mall should be slapped the highest tax rate because the brand used to be imported by Duty Free shops.

The Sin Tax law requires the imposition of the highest excise tax rate on imported brands, the BIR said.

In arguing its case, BAT insisted that domestically produced Pall Mall was launched in the market in 2004, much earlier than the time Duty Free shops began importing the brand. The government should not have used as basis the importation of Pall Mall by Duty Free shops in deciding the tax rate appropriate for the brand, BAT had said.

Hart said that, with the imposition of the highest excise tax rate on Pall Mall, BAT would not be able to compete with other cigarette brands, such as those of Fortune Tobacco owned by tycoon Lucio Tan. Fortune Tobacco brands are taxed a tax rate of P6.74 a pack.

Also, BAT had decided not to bring the Pall Mall case to court. Pilot said it would only be a waste of time and money if BAT were to slug it out in court.

Michelle V. Rosca

House OKs Transco franchise

By Abigail L. Ho

THE NATIONAL GRID CORPORation of the Philippines (NGCP), the group that won the bid to operate, manage and expand the country's electricity superhighway, has moved one step closer to securing a franchise.

The Lower House overall approved NGCP's franchise application on third reading. Hearings and deliberations would now move to the Senate, in which the group was expected to encounter some opposition.

In a telephone interview yesterday, Mikey Arroyo, chair and president of consortium member Monte Oro Grid Resources Corp., said the group was "happy" about the House approval.

"We're now preparing to move to the Senate," he said. "We're confident that we can get it done well for the time limit."

Bolstering the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp.'s signing and transmittal to NGCP of the direct agreement for the National Transmission Corp. concession in November last year, the consortium had 12 months to overtake Congress' 25-year franchise to take over the power superhighway.

The franchise will allow NGCP to operate, maintain and expand the Transco network for 25 years.

Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Espino
BUSINESS Friday

Pretty business finally pays off

Haircut service innovator now eyes global reach

LES REYES (center) of Reyes Hairstylers with his crew.

By Margie Quimpo-Espino

THERE ARE QUITE A few entrepreneurs, who started their businesses in their 40s or beyond—Col. Sanders of KFC, Mary Kay of the direct selling company bearing her name, even Ray Kroc of McDonald's.

Les Reyes is a Filipino, who did not invent finger-lickin' fried chicken or a line of beauty products. But like Ray Kroc, he stumbled upon a way of providing services at a very popular price.

Les did not invent anything new. He simply provided a market segment with services they never even given before: at prices they can afford.

He provides salon services at very affordable rates and jamming the costs of these service on the glass panels of the salon.

He says he first branched the idea to hotelier Ricky Uba (famed hairstylist and owner of a chain of salons), who, however, felt it was going to cater to a market that was very different from what he is serving. Besides as Ricky had stated in the past, having come from very humble beginnings, he did not want to compete with small-time salons knowing how it is to have started from one.

But Les felt there was a market for his idea. Without much capital but believing in his strategy, he converted his Khan Beyer Salon in San Juan into Reyes Hairstylers. His color schemes were green and dark pink and he plastered his price list of his services on the glass walls.

He says he was shocked at the response of the market. His P49.50 haircut brought in the customers.

"Not that we do not just go for haircut. They go for a foot spa or 'nail polish'," says Les during an interview with the Inquirer.

Haircut remains his most popular service averaging 50 to 100 a day and with a gross income of between P2,500 and P5,000 daily. Foot spa at P 99.50 is a close second.

But the beauty of the business, says Les, is the low price of the haircut, which makes people go for his other services which thus the average tab of some can up to thousands.

And everybody goes to only.

"This people whose money are in dayong on the race, who give P100 tips."

To best describe his market, he says, a trip to cuts can be pulled beside a BMW in front of his salon.

Les feels that by providing some of the amenities of the more expensive salons, such as softening cold water, iced tea, fresh towels, magazines, a toilet and clean surroundings, they were able to attract a market, who may not be used to the sometimes daunting environment in high-end salons but who have the money to splurge on pampering themselves.

And, he says, he provides his clients of a choice of products similar to those used in the higher-end salons. So hair color can range from a low of P149.50 as much as P2,000.

Les admits his inspiration to do well has always been his brother Ricky, who sent him to school, and their mother, who is already in her 90s.

He says he once he went go into all kinds of business just to feed the family. But from his brother Ricky, he saw the unique ability to be an artist and to have good entrepreneur, which, he says, is rare because artists usually cannot manage money well.

LES ADMITS his inspirations are his brother Ricky, who sent him to school, and their mother

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Take Two

By Francis J. Yu
Contributor

THE YEAR IS 2000 AND THE WORLD has just gotten over the Y2K scare. What was ominously portrayed as a global meltdown proved to be much ado over nothing. Meanwhile, in the Philippines, the year is marked by political turbulence, which leads to impeachment proceedings against then President Joseph Estrada in November.

TAKING TURNS: Two of the second Shopwise stores.

Everyone is riveted by the five-hour hearings where a political drama unfolds, complete with fashionable heroines, unlikely heroes, a surprise witness and a friend pushing of an envelope to its very limits.

Corazon Tantoco, vice president of Shopwise, and I are on our way to Pasay Taxi—former Mrs. Cruz Enterprises in Makati. This is the site of the second Shopwise store. It was Nov. 28, 2000, and it is our second store opening. We are quite relaxed. It is, after all, our second launch and we had learned many lessons since the first time we opened. A buy-2-take-2 sale on all fresh items is the major lesson of this launch.

We are about an hour early. But a few blocks away from the site, we notice a large crowd standing in line at the entrance of Shopwise, waiting for it to open.

Our jaws drop in amazement. Are people to giggle with excitement and give each other high fives. "They're coming to our store opening!" we exclaim. The lucky ones of Shopwise-and's big discount was apparently a huge draw.

When we open the doors at 9 a.m., there is a mad rush by the people to enter the store. Within a few minutes, there is no more empty space left within the 5,000-square-meter selling space.

It has only been two years since the first Shopwise store opened, but the store has somehow already earned a name for itself as one the highly competitive modern retail trade. We would first establishing base big and well located, as the leading players were.

There were two initial success factors that we now take for granted. The first was the location. The second was promotions. The opening of the Pasay Taxi store exemplified the powerful draw of discount promotions.

Freshness first

Prior to the opening of Shopwise, the typical consumer behavior among the working class would be to purchase groceries in a supermarket and fresh goods in a wet market. The wet markets had lower prices, a wider assortment and the image of freshness, especially for fish. What if, we reasoned, we could offer parity pricing with wet markets in a modern, air-conditioned and clean shopping environment? We may actually succeed in capturing a substantial share of the consumer's wallet.

This would be the time, and decade, we already in the store. they might as well buy their groceries as well. It worked like a charm. Today a compelling fresh food section is a must in any modern supermarket in Metro Manila.

Let the games begin.

Bargain-hunting is the sport of choice for most women. A 30-percent discount, a buy-1-take-1 offer, a buy-2-take-2 offer, loyalty card programs with big rebates, exclusive sales and the like are all ways intended to lure savvy shoppers.

We were reborn in the context of Shopwise. Pasay Taxi on Nov. 28, 2000. The day has progressed tremendously. Long lines of customers are patiently waiting with their full carts at the checkout counters. There is a mix of those from the affluent set, standing side by side with the middle- to lower middle-income customer groups.

It is a heartening sight as our corporate vision was, "To Provide Quality for All." We really wanted to attract a broad market segment, "un-wanted customers from all walks of life.

We are did attract customers from all walks of life alright.

(The author is Shopwise VP for marketing.)

Hedge funds...

From page B3-4

Hedge funds have not had a great year. The HFRI Fund Weighted Composite Index, which measures returns, was down 1.17 percent in the year to June 30, after rising 9.86 percent in 2007 and 13.93 percent in 2006, according to data compiled by Hedge Fund Research.

Small business suffers

Conventional lending to small firms has also suffered.

According to a quarterly US Federal Reserve survey of senior bank loan officers in April, 52 percent of respondents tightened lending standards for companies with annual sales of less than $50 million, up from 30 percent in January.

Also, 65 percent of banks said they made the loans more expensive, up from around 40 percent in January.

The US Small Business Administration recorded a decline of 8 percent in its most popular loans for the year to Aug. 1 versus 2007.

The lack of credit has pushed more small companies toward hedge funds like MacKenzie Realty Capital, which specializes in one-year bridge loans for commercial real estate deals of up to $50 million.

"We have seen more firms come to us for funding, and the quality of those firms has increased," said Josh Zegen, MacKenzie managing partner. "A year ago they would have had far more funding options, but the market is less competitive now."

Earlier this year, Jim Gee, owner of Trinity Communications, a cable television operator company in South Pittsburg, Tennessee, resorted to bank loans to increase his business by laying more fiber optic cable, but was repeatedly turned down.

"Basically I was told the only money the banks are lending right now is to folks who don't need it," Gee said.

Gee's attorney put him in touch with Sandy Beckwith, which lent him $700,000 four months ago and $900,000 more a few weeks ago—both at a rate of approximately 14 percent. Citing the first loan, he expects 2009 revenue to rise to $2.3 million from $1 million in 2007.

"The rate wasn't that bad and considering they were taking a risk by lending to me, I viewed it very fairly," Gee said. "I had to use my fiber optic network as collateral, but a bank would have demand exactly the same thing." Bonnie Samuels, a member of the board of the National Federation of Independent Business, said the funds' interests were way too high, but small firms have little choice.

"The hedge funds know when small companies need money they need it fast. They can't wait for the next economic cycle," Samuels said. "They also know where to look for returns."

Bernanke added that the interest rates may seem high, but small businesses lack the leverage of large corporations and need to pay higher rates.

With the US sector continuing to ebb and the financial sector to unwind, the funds managers expect the boom to continue.

"I would be surprised if anyone was naive enough to believe that the largest dislocation of asset values in American history is going to right itself in an orderly' issue," said Sandy Villere, president of Villere & Co. "We are coming on this cycle lasting a couple of years." *Reuters*

Brands help enhance cost of doing business

By Karen V. De Asis

THERE IS AN ONGOING DEBATE IN boardrooms on whether to provide resources for the development of brands or to continue selling commodity products.

While business owners realize the value of having brands in their portfolio, the cost of building brands drives them from acting on this.

Moreover, business owners—like the increasing cost of raw materials, goods and services, distribution and other upcoming costs—compete for allocation to the working capital. It is no wonder that the business owner is hardly left with adequate funds for branding.

Often, a renewed interest—whether in or abroad with brand development and enjoy the benefits on the long term or have marginal profits on the short term.

Brands vs commodity

Not all products are brands, even if they have a great name, label and packaging, substantial advertising fund or just being present in malls. So long as consumers do not see any difference between products and services to a category no one player is a brand and all are commodities.

A commodity has no perceptual differences in the minds of consumers. On the other hand, a brand is perceived to be distinct from other products or services in the same category. Even if a product or service is indeed generic or similar to others in the category, so long as consumers and potential users perceive it as different, a product or service then becomes a brand. Brands are not built overnight. The right target market, a differentiating but relevant message that will, consistency in communicating the message at all probable contact points with the potential consumer and financial resources to constantly care the product's differentiation is necessary to building brands.

Why build brands?

There are many tangible benefits of being a brand. Some include:

- Recall. A time-starved consumer is likely to recall and easily recognize a brand over a commodity product. This becomes a decided advantage when a potential buyer is presented with several options to choose from.
- Reduced incidence of obsolescence and profitability. A brand that is easily recalled, and relevant to the consumer behavior of a potential consumer is more likely to have quick and repeated cycles of sales turnover and trade off-take whether it be consumable or durable products and services.
- Brands make from Cash is king. The faster the product or service flies from the shelf or trade into the hands of the consumers, the quicker can any business owners from an investment. Cash burden typically ranges from 60 to 180 days depending on the industry then, the quicker the investment picks up the product or service, the sooner the collection time.
- Leverage distribution costs. In recent years, distribution costs have become substantively high, fighting for either space in the business or servicing capital. While presence in cards is important, products or services do not necessarily move just by being available. There is greater need to stimulate consumer demand to ensure that products or services move from the shelf or trade. Distributors may be willing to allow a cut in margin provided principals are able to establish quick turnover. Retail landlords offer the best, prime and preferred space to flagship tenants because these have become cash hounds with a strong following thus, ensuring even more foot traffic.
- Leverage with media suppliers. Media houses are willing to offer special packages to brands. Moreover, they are guaranteed sustained business. Thus, they are in a better position to negotiate or provide efficient media buys for clients.
- Global entry. Investing in brand building in the home country is like a insurance in the event that business owners want to expand into the international markets. Foreign distributors study the principal's way of managing their own brands.

What it takes to be effective

- Brand mind-set. Even the top brand building is a long-term business activity. Much like allocating for cans of goods, distribution and operating costs, brand building activities need to be budgeted consistently.
- Iterative thinking. Brand builder have a sixth sense. They know what customers want even before the buyer are able to express their desires. This is done by years of dedicated, consistent interaction and study, expertise and strong sensitivity to consumer needs.
- Think out of the box. Industry and category players often share the same mind-set having to do business in consistent manner. We wonder, more business players often have similar brand problems. Only the more visionary operators, innovators and often cannibalize markets share from within. But thinking out of the box is better safe than done.
- Have a brave heart. It is no easy decision to invest in brand building when business owners have sustained their operations by selling commodity products. But as competition becomes stiff and consumers are more focused, edgeable, demanding and exacting, the separation of a brand goes a very long way to building a cash-following among consumers. Here comes the challenge for many old-time business owners: To evolve or not to shift a product from a mere commodity to a brand and, along the way, make substantial investments in rebranding the life of their products leaving a legacy for the next family generation. It is never like starting a new business all over again. Only a brave heart with great belief in one's brand and dogged determination can rise to the challenge of brand building.
- Have a differentiating, relevant message to say. Commodity products are only because brands provided them a perceived difference in the minds of consumers. Having the right message that resonates and unique are relevance is a great way to start brand building.

Adequate and sustained working capital for brand building is necessary. Having the appropriate message is one challenge, the other is allocating resources to communicate the message. Here is where most business owner crash a crossroad. It is best if the business owners have a brand salad are from the beginning. The good news is, there are many good tools these days to help the business owners efficiently manage their resources, media buys and communication costs.

Brand building has often been relegated to the backburner, reserved to only when owners are faced or when demand has reached rock bottom. Even then, when a commodity product can be evolved into a brand, business owners hesitate to do so because of the expenses. Budgets for building brands are nearly the same as distribution expenses, in some cases even lesser. Consider by products can only evolve into brands when business owners start treating brand building as a line item adequately appropriated for in the annual budget.

More about building brands in the next selling book, "Color Folders in The Mind: A Branding Story," available at Fully Booked, Powerbooks and National Bookstore. Feedback at www.karenvasde-asis.com or kdasis@sky.net.net.

Top 30 of the 2007 World's Most Valuable Brands

	Brand	Country of Origin	Industry	2007 Brand Value ($M)	Change in brand value from previous year
1	Coca-Cola	US	Beverages	65,324	5%
2	Microsoft	US	Computer software	58,709	2%
3	IBM	US	Computer services	57,091	3%
4	General Electric	US	Diversified	51,569	5%
5	Nokia	Finland	Consumer electronics	33,696	12%
6	Toyota	Japan	Automotive	32,515	11%
7	Intel	US	Computer hardware	30,954	4%
8	McDonald's	US	Restaurants	29,398	1%
9	Disney	US	Media	29,218	0%
10	Mercedes	Germany	Automotive	23,509	5%
11	Citi	US	Financial services	23,443	9%
12	Hewlett-Packard	US	Computer hardware	22,167	9%
13	BMW	Germany	Automotive	21,812	10%
14	Marlboro	US	Tobacco	21,293	3%
15	American Express	US	Financial services	20,827	6%
16	Gillette	US	Personal care	20,616	4%
17	Louis Vuitton	France	Luxury	20,321	11%
18	Cisco	US	Computer services	18,084	9%
19	Honda	Japan	Automotive	17,998	6%
20	Google	US	Internet services	17,937	44%
21	Samsung	Korea	Consumer electronics	16,863	4%
22	Merrill Lynch	US	Financial services	13,843	10%
23	HSBC	UK	Financial services	13,683	11%
24	Nescafé	Switzerland	Beverages	12,958	4%
25	Sony	Japan	Consumer electronics	12,887	10%
26	Pepsi	US	Beverages	12,598	2%
27	Oracle	US	Computer software	12,598	9%
28	SAP	US	Nanopotentials	12,013	12%
29	Nike	US	Sporting goods	12,004	10%
30	Budweiser	US	Alcohol	11,862	0%

Pretty business finally pays off

From page B3-1

But, he says, he admires Ricky because he was able to combine his business success with philanthropy. Reuben Ricky has been the inspirator in salon styles and wigs over the past years.

In fact, he considers a lot of Ricky's practices such as supporting causes. He says every P1 from a haircut in Reuben Ricky goes to the Philippine Cancer Society to help finance studies to find a cure for breast cancer.

Since he has a training institute (Jose like Ricky), he provides training to battered wives and rape victims, who, he says, "blossom" after the training and appear like changed persons.

"It's like the training provides them with a new lease in life," he says.

He says he uses environmental and nutritional products to ensure quality as many who have copied his strategy of low-priced haircuts (and putting the price on the glass windows) and have thrown out their own formulation leading to hair or skin damage or allergy.

But he has come up with the Reuben Hairwomen line of products like shampoos and conditioner, hair oil, gel, soap and, recently, neem shampoo and hair oil for PHP150, which are all manufactured by a big local beauty firm.

"One day I hope to have my own store of products like Beckham and Victoria," he says.

Reuben has two salons—that is in the Salon ng Reuben. His target is to have 5,000 salons all over the Philippines. Right now there are 264 Reuben Hairwomen, only 20 of which are company-owned while the rest are franchises.

The franchise conditions (ranges depending on the location: P6 mm P10 Pesos) for example, value means a franchisee in Boracay, may share of his clients include the island paradise's rich visitors. He is planning to put up two more salons in the area.

Lots' values—and visionaries—goal is to be the Salon ng Mundo. And he has started. He has one now in London, opened by a former franchisee in Orlando.

Lots says where he started in 2002, it was his clients, who asked him for franchises. And ironically it was only after his 800th franchisee that he got a consultant to help him work out the systems and processes.

Initially, he was selling a franchise for only P300,000. Today it costs P350,000 and it includes some of the machines and training for the staff.

For now what is keeping Lots busy is his vision to expand to the rest of the Philippines and the world.

LEADING trade fairs as ways of making and selling "kakanins," Alejo (left) improved her packaging so her products could be sold to a wider market.

GUTSY ONE Alejo is one of the few among many other "binaggong" vendors in Barangay Kidapawan in Sto. Domingo, Albay, to bring her native products to stalls.

No more aching feet for 'kakanin' vendor

Text and photos by Ephraim Agrabio
Inquirer Southern Luzon

STO. DOMINGO, ALBAY—A STRUGGLING single mother, Leticia Alejo would rise up very early to make rounds in villages serving a seven basket filled with "binaggong," the town's native version of "kakanin."

After a long day of selling, the would-be home earn less than P500 and aching feet.

Alejo might have thought she would be enough to make both ends meet for her humbly but she realized she could upgrade her business.

Today, Alejo, from being just a walking binaggong vendor, is a living example of success as many other binaggong makers in Barangay Kidapawan.

In this village, there are around 70 households cooking and selling binaggong, which has been identified as the province's main product for the Department of Trade and Industry.

Binaggong is a native kakanin made from cassava, rice, sweet potato, and banana, all mainly ingredients of products of the town.

Based Marcos, trade and industries development specialist of the DTI in Albay, said binaggong served as alternative food by the locals in the height of the Japanese invasion in the region.

"The people were not able to fill their stomachs with anything but cassava or rice of the Japanese. After World War II, binaggong-making became a common livelihood in the community," Warren said.

From village stores, Alejo's native foods have now reached malls in the cities of Tabaco and Legazpi carrying the brand name "Mama Lutz Delicacies."

Alejo said the secret thought all these developments in her product and business were possible.

"For the many of the binaggong makers here in our place, I grew up in traditional ways of cooking and selling," Alejo claimed.

But through DTI-sponsored trainings, Alejo was able to develop her products and improve their packaging.

From unsophisticated plastic wrappers, Alejo's products are now gracefully stuffed in polyprotene foam commonly known as "styrofoam") with colored labels to them.

She also got her products approved by the Bureau of Food and Drugs.

At first Alejo was hesitant, to even participate, about introducing her ways of business.

"I never had a bigger vision for my livelihood. But one day I said, why not give it a try?" said Alejo, who used P15,000 of her savings to start anew.

Now, Alejo does not have to walk around cities to sell. She was the first among Fidel barangay leaders to bring her products to the mall.

For her, earning two stalls in malls is not a bad start as her P300 earnings have escalated to at least P4,000 daily.

Alejo said she seeks to expand her business by incorporating on technology that will improve the shelf-life of her binaggong.

"I want my products to reach places outside the region. I have once told my problem to people who brought them to us in Agusan, Cebu and Davao," Alejo said.

She added that networking one's loyal consumers does wonders in promoting the business. "My products are advertised by word of mouth. There would be times when, unexpectedly, customers would just stop my house and place bulk orders," Alejo said.

There are around 50 food vendors under binaggong.

Some of Alejo's products are the talong-talong, bananas, sweet potato, sugar cane, tinagan (cassava), corn, young coconut, cassava kakanin (lush, soaked milk, evaporated, cassava, taro), and many others.

High cost of ingredients

Despite the development to Alejo's business, she said the current economic slump badly affects binaggong makers.

Coconut, a necessary ingredient, costs at least P25 per piece. Before Superphosphate Binaong (wrapped sweeter coconut plants. Once is Food, it only cost P6.

The prices of cassava, sesame, sunlight (glutinous rice) and sugar have also increased.

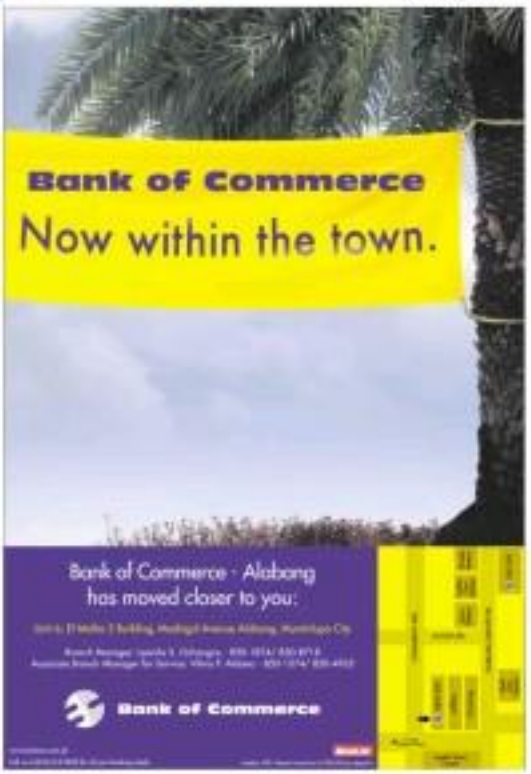
Warren said it is on a time like this when entrepreneurs should be educated and empowered.

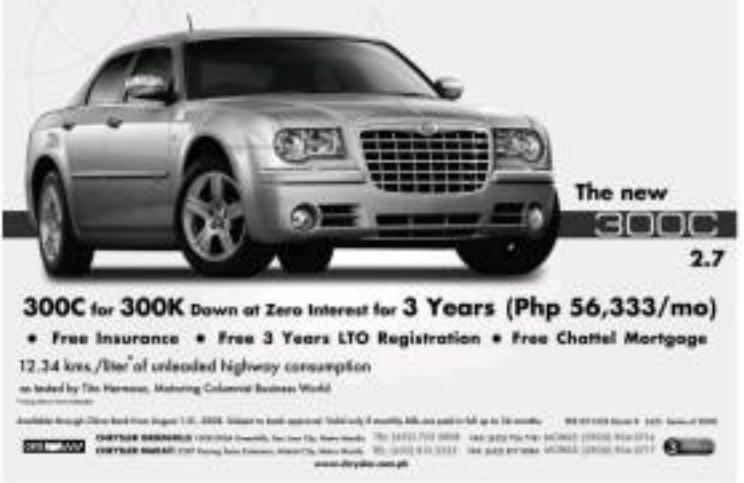
He said it is challenging to convince makers of native products, who are mostly looked to traditional production and marketing means, to widen their horizons.

"In 2005, the DTI sponsored a local study mission trip to Cebu, Bohol, to expose binaggong makers to other successful native food entrepreneurs," Warren said, adding that rural narrow-minders could easily imitate others.

Warren said the binaggong makers of Sto. Domingo still need more capability-enhancement trainings to hone their morale, better technology to increase production, and new marketing strategies to broaden their niche.

Now, each day for Alejo is bright each week an aching feet.





BUSINESS Friday

How to do painless price increases

THIS WEEK, PVC SIDEFOLDER (the coleman and a series on pricing which first came out in February 2004 when the peso was trading from a series of devaluations (and was forecasted to reach P61=US$1 or one point) and even this paper had to increase to cover price by P3. So here it is again and we hope this helps you in the midst of pressure to increase your prices.

An eternal question that will haunt Filipino marketers faced with consumers dealing with rising prices of rice, gas and everything else in between (except for the domestic airlines who are still dishing out almost everyday low airfares!) is this: how do I increase the selling price of my products without losing my customers?

Many times, marketers or the finance guys in the office will determine the price increase by simply adding on the increase in cost. Many will hold off and absorb the cost of a more expensive dollar or raw materials by trying to be more cost efficient.

We say there's a better way.

Asking the right question

The best way to go about a price increase is to ask the consumer—your customer—the question: at what price are you NOT willing to buy this product anymore? Basically, when you do your market research, you never ask them what price they are willing to pay. You'll get baloney answers. They'll say "figure lyong mura." People don't know what they want. But they do know what they DON'T WANT.

Case in point: Just ask your spouse or date, "Honey where do you want to eat?" He or she will say "I don't know. Ikaw?" in zoom so you make some suggestions like, "OK, how about Kenji's?" You'll get a reaction like, "No! I don't like. We just had sukiyaki Ang's legs the other night." Then you suggest a few more restaurants and the two of you will hastily arrive at a decision by process of elimination.

It's the same thing with pricing your products. Let your customers tell you at what price they are or are willing to pay anymore for your product or service. There is an organized, scientific way of doing this. Most professional research agencies can know how to do this. (The writer WAS pleased and proclaimed this kind of price research and insight research agencies how to use it.) If you're an entrepreneur, you can still do this kind of research, do-it-yourself-style.

All you have to do is show your product or a description of your product and produce a chart displaying the current price of your product's or service's. Then show a series of prices that are higher than the current price. Then ask the question: "OK, here's the price of the product that you are currently buying. At what price will you begin to substitute, replace or stop buying this product?" Then you show the prices to increasing scale. Take note of their answers. If you have a small trading business with 20 or 30 customers, then you can do a census and ask all of your customers. If you have 20,000 customers, then ask your friendly neighborhood research agency to survey a correct sampling of your customer base.

Dr. Ned Roberto &
Andy Roberto

Surprise!

At the end of the day, you'll have data that might surprise you. You may even find out that a good majority of your customers are so loyal to your product that they would tolerate a price increase much higher than what you were thinking of. A couple of dozens of cases actually discovered this.

An example. At what price would you, dear reader, stop buying this newspaper? At P20? How about P22? How about P25? How about P27? (Dog it would be cool if you could let us know. Text or your answer to 0920-9219618. Text 'A' for P20, 'B' for P22, 'C' for P25, 'D' for P28, 'E' for P27.)

Of course, greed and taking advantage of your customers' loyalty is another matter. But wouldn't you rather have that data, that intimate knowledge of what the consumer is thinking, and base your price increase decision on that? Versus making a decision based on a bunch of marketing and finance executives/bosses and assumptions.)

'Killing me softly...'

One of the most popular sessions in the Senior MBA seminars is the session on price sensitivity research. (You can also read about this in the book, "User-Friendly Marketing Research 3rd edition" available at National Bookstore or the AIM Library.) What you'll discover there is that consumers would rather be slapped with one big price increase instead of a series of small increases. (Of course, if you are Monica or Carlos, that's a different story.)

When you increase prices little by little on a regular basis, consumers feel the pain. Some describe it as if they're being slowly stabbed with a blunt screwdriver. Some consumers compare it to going to a dentist to have an ultrasound tooth pulled out. "Don't do it slowly! Do what you've got to do! Pull it out and let's get the pain over with!"

When they'd rather have you do it to give them one big punch/pushdown cut now, with the next one to come, well, two years from now when Noli de Castro or Boy Abunda makes it cool for the presidency. Only God, or Lucio Tan, knows what the price of coil and the exchange rate will be by that time. So keep a copy of this column, it will come in handy again in 2030.

For comments or questions, e-mail us at marketingrx@aol.com. If more than enough, visit our blog at www.marketingrx.org. "The Best of Marketing Rx for Entrepreneurs" is now available at bookstores and from books. God bless!

Hedge funds expand role as small business lender

CHICAGO—HEDGE FUNDS ARE known for playing many roles on Wall Street, but not usually for lending to small businesses that are turned down by banks is hardly one of them.

Yet with the credit crunch pushing many major US banks to set tougher lending standards for small and medium-sized businesses, hedge funds have stepped in.

The money isn't cheap, with interest rates of 14 percent or more, but small businesses have few places to turn.

"A major void has been created in the marketplace by banks tightening their credit standards and trying to stabilize their balance sheets," said Harold Ofeld, co-founder of Laurus Wilcox, a hedge fund with around $1.7 billion under management. "From the investment point of view, this is as good as it gets."

Laurus Wilcox provides loans to public and private companies with average revenues of $50 to $80 million. The fund charges interest rates of about 10 percent to 11 percent, and takes equity stakes in the companies.

Gets extension that: Laurus-Sidoro lending to small companies is up 30 percent from a year ago.

Small businesses are considered a linchpin of the US economy, forming the backbone of the country's jobs market and playing a crucial role in creating jobs. According to US Census Bureau data, the United States had 5.12 million paid employers in 2002. About 56.4 million, or about 50 percent, worked at companies with fewer than 500 employees.

Attractive to big investors

Hedge funds have been lending to small companies for decades. But as they exploded in recent years to become a $2 trillion industry, small business lending has also taken off—especially since credit markets tightened a year ago and as the funds sought other investments after conventional markets turned sour.

"This kind of product will be attractive to big institutional investors, a lot of whom have done poorly in the fixed income market," said Penny Sanchez, senior hedge fund analyst for Lipper Inc., a unit of Thomson Financial Corp. "So long as the major banks' balance sheets have not been completely stabilized, there is a pretty good window of opportunity for hedge funds."

Sanchezen estimated the market for "asset based lending"—the industry term for loans to businesses—has grown to anywhere between $5 to $10 billion currently from around $700 million two years ago.

Hedge fund managers say demand is robust as they are seeking fresh cash from investors.

"We've lent more money in the past six months than in the past 10 years," said Steven Bands, portfolio manager at Bands Brothers Asset Management, which manages assets of around $140 million and issues loans averaging $1 million and more to small businesses. "We are raising fresh funds for this product."

HBDB/RO-1

LIFESTYLE Fashion & Beauty

Editor Thelma Sioson San Juan

Contributing Editors
Jenni Egerman
and Agnes Alcaraz-Sadhwani

THE LAST TYPE the author's mom Blesh Ortega wore this particular (hot dad say). "Now I know how it felt to be married to Papa Emma."

Mom's obsessions

I believe that my mother's choice of boots is an accurate representation of the Philippine economy

BIBETH ORTEGA-ALEJANDRO'S more outer shoe-year is more in keeping with her political mood.

By Sara Sigson-Reyes
Contributor

MY MOTHER, BIBETH ORTEGA, HAS a peculiar trait: when it comes to interior obsession. It isn't the same as being obsessed with many material things. It's more that she finds one particular object to have a fixation on.

What it arrange a her ability to choose obsessions in which she has had an previous interest. When I was younger it was the garden. Our garden had always been an essential as a garden could be, with shrubs here and there, a paved plan, a few healthy trees, and grass. Then suddenly my mom woke up with this

MORE>>

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Moving into your own house, driving your own car, sending your children to school, and retiring at a young age—these are just a few of the many milestones in life that we desire to achieve.

Here's how you can start to Save-Up and prepare for these milestones.

PAY YOURSELF FIRST.
It's payday, who gets your pay first? Is it the bill collector or the cashier at the mall? Before anything else, remember to pay yourself first. Keep 10-20% of your pay in a savings account. Choose a savings account that helps you resist from touching your funds and rewards your savings with a higher interest.

Got extra money from your bonus or commission? Treat yourself or pay-off your loans but strive to keep a portion of it safely tucked away in your savings account.

AUTOMATE YOUR SAVINGS.
Setting up a separate savings account is a good start, but the hassle of manually doing the funds transfer, or even remembering to do the funds transfer, gets in the way of us actually saving efficiently.

The simple and hassle-free solution is to automate your savings. Leave it to your bank to save your money for you. That way, you are sure that your savings grows every payday. You'll also get used to seeing a smaller balance in your ATM account, making it easier for you to scale down your spending.

KEEP A MONEY JOURNAL.
Not sure where your money goes? Keep tabs on a money journal. Simply jot down every expense as you go about the day.

At the end of each month your journal will reveal your spending habits. This will help you pinpoint what kind of expense drains the most of your money. Is it your impulse shopping or is your favorite cafe getting the better part of your pay? Now that you're aware, you can cut on these expenses and channel the money towards the things that matter most.

INVEST IN AN INSURANCE POLICY.
You're not just saving for yourself. It's a good idea to invest in a life and accident insurance. It will keep your family secure and finances to independent in the future.

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SET YOUR MONEY'S WORTH.
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Man writes a tell-all on the Birkin

His book a must-read, he's made a fortune reselling the iconic bag

TOTED BY HOLLYWOOD actresses and some of the world's wealthiest women, the Hermès Birkin is the ultimate status symbol. It has a wait list of two years.

The running joke among fashionistas the world over is that there's even a wait list to get on that wait list.

"See and the City" had an episode where fashionista gets into trouble with Lucy Liu over the coveted bag. "It's not a bag, it's a Birkin," Samantha says.

Yet one man was somehow able to ingeniously crack the Birkin code, writing a tell-all book about it that has become a sleeper hit.

Michael Tonello's "Bringing Home the Birkin" is such a wonderful book (my beloved copy is highlighted to almost every page). It tells the story of how he became a millionaire by acquiring and reselling the world's most coveted bag on eBay.

Tonello has an engaging and breezy style of writing. His book is part fashion bible, and part adventure travelogue and marketing manual, and has been described as "David Sedaris Presents 'It Bites in Provence'" meets "Catch Me If You Can."

A makeup artist by profession, Tonello moved to Barcelona many years ago. Needing a way to earn income, he first made a successful eBay sale with a Ralph Lauren scarf. One thing led to another, and soon he discovered there was a hungry market for the mythical Birkin bag.

In his book, he narrates his five-year Birkin-shopping journey around the world, in terms of the most beautiful cities, from Capri to Tokyo, southern France and Buenos Aires. It also has his current experiences with his rich and eccentric clientele.

Now here's the exciting part. Since most he's back, I was raving about Michael's book to my blog, and thanks to the creative power of the Internet, Michael contacted me and said he was glad I loved his book!

A few more e-mail exchanges later, I was able to snag an exclusive interview and an autographed copy of his book.

Before reading the interview below, you'll get a copy of his book.

What made you decide to uproot yourself and leave your comfort zone to move to Barcelona, even if you don't speak the language?

On my very first visit to Barcelona I fell in love with the city and the people and just felt the need to live there. In retrospect it wasn't the most well-thought out and/or planned move. However I don't have one single regret.

Did it feel painful to part with any of the luxury items you sold on eBay? Or was the money just too good?

No, totally painless. All of those items were just stuff, it means is actually felt good to purge myself of some of the stuff that was clouding my life.

What one luxury item will you never part with? What was your most extravagant item ever, or items that you can say you have "suffered" for?

A client gifted me with a Hermès "chaîne d'ancre" bracelet that I was convinced has become a good-luck charm. I would never part with it.

What do you think is the main difference between Europeans, Asians and American fashionistas, based on your observations?

Europeans are obsessed with "labels." Americans and Asians love to show the brand name of what they are wearing on everything. Europeans wear their labels on the inside.

During your travel adventure to find the Holy Grail of all bags, did you gain a deeper respect for die-hard fashionistas, or did they become more of "victims" in your eyes?

I would have to say victims. In the end all of this stuff is simply stuff. I personally love being one of that obsession.

The book has been a fine success, and was described by a local bookstore employee here as "a sleeper hit." It seems even you were surprised! Have you always been a writer?

This is my first book. During my first years of traveling, doing my Birkin-thing I was constantly asked what I did for a living. When I told people my story, they would always say something like "you should write a book" or "sounds like some crazy mid-series" or "wow, that's stranger than fiction." So, finally I thought I better start writing all of this down before I begin to forget some of it. Now that it's all written and published I am rather shocked at to how much press we got and the amazing reviews.

Shopping is a passion for you, and you've managed to cut out it into a kind of sport but also a lucrative business. Any advice for the die-hard shopaholic fashionistas in Manila?

Buy classics and buy the very best you can afford.

You seem to have a very positive outlook. What was your greatest lesson after this experience with the great Birkin search?

Don't get caught up in negative drama and always see the glass as half full.

After reading your book, did any of your readers apply "The Formula" successfully?

I'm not certain. I do know that I get e-mails from readers through my website all the time saying they are going to use the formula on their next trip to Hermès.

Exactly how many Birkin bags did you eventually acquire during those years? Could you roughly estimate around how much that cost?

I don't have an exact count. I do know that in 2005, I spent $1.8 million at Hermès and that same year I bought 130 or 131 Birkin between September and Christmas.

Rich women everywhere were practically willing to sell you their first-born child for a Birkin. What was by far the most lavish lover you've received? Is it true that they are in your good graces?

I think we would each have a different idea of what "lavish" is... but for me the most ravishing item was getting to have the Aaron Martin for a couple of weeks. That was like a dream come true!

How did Hermès eventually find out about your counter-cavalry Birkin shopping spree?

I thought that perhaps someone in the Paris headquarters noticed my name on the many credit-card receipts or something. One of my clients eventually suggested it might have been that Hermès was anonymously tipped off to me by some "Birkin Bridie" (i.e. a jealous competitor). I've heard that all Hermès stores were faxed information about my book and me. I don't know the details of that fax though.

Did you get any reaction from Hermès about your book since it was published?

At first Hermès did not comment on it. Now I've been told by some of the Hermès sales people that Hermès is very pleased by my book. My book has brought a huge amount of publicity to their brand name. If you read my book you will see that I do not speak badly whatsoever about Hermès... in fact I love Hermès, they changed my life.

Personally do you think the Birkin deserves all the hype? Or do you think its desirability is a classic example of genius marketing strategies for luxe brands?

I feel it is 100-percent marketing genius. Business schools should consider teaching the Birkin marketing strategy; it really is quite remarkable and has served Hermès very well for more than 20 years now.

E-mail the author at jfinch.inq@inquirer.com.ph

Jenni J. Epperson

THE 'IT' book for the 'It' girl

BASIC 35-cm leather Birkin is considered the "starter Birkin."

Some of Michael's Hermès selections for his clients:

MICHAEL has bought, sold and resold this Birkin several times.

35-CM FUCHSIA crocodile Birkin

KELLY Lakis

BLUE crocodile Birkin is dubbed as the "teenage" bag.

A PAGE from Tonello's Hermès Lilycatalogue with a list of Birkins he purchased in 2005

model citizens model citizens model citizens model citizens model citizens model citizens model citizens model citizens

Quirky accessories

Photos by Cameron Cloud Clark

GIVEN THE INFLATION, THE EASIEST WAY TO PUMP UP your wardrobe is to invest in accessories. Choose statement pieces and quirky trinkets to give this season's mix-and-match duds that added jolt.

From vintage scarves to long chains, fun headbands, and more bright jewelry, they are anything but boring.

ASHLEY

ASTRID

HANNAH

JANTHINA

model citizens model citizens model citizens model citizens model citizens model citizens model citizens

Theresa

Jonna

Tanya

Melissa

Veronica

Sara

Stacey

Camie

THE AUTHOR'S MOM is... 'lendible.'

Mom's obsessions

From page B1

JUST A PORTION of the author's mom's boots 'armory'

overboard appreciation of the finer parts of gardening.

Suddenly everything was being dug out, and replaced. When was once a sanctuary for shrubs was now a thriving Calathea[1] tree; that old lava by the gate was now a rose bush; and sprawling on the walls was a rich ivy, so different from the dead clutter of plants that once surrounded the perimeter.

She didn't just involve the garden in the makeover; she tried to make sure we would have fun as well. One of my best memories as a young girl is going with her, my aunts and uncles and a family friend on a road trip to Batanes.

We spent the whole day traveling through garden nurseries, strolling this and that, she asking me my opinion (I remember wanting pink, for every flower), and beaming with pride as the new plants found a home in the garden (even if I didn't get my wish of all, pink).

Graduating to shoes

Eventually, she lost interest in the garden. She eventually graduated to shoes.

My mother is possibly even more committed than the Soviets in her choice of clothes. Going out, she wears a long-sleeved polo, jeans, and a longchamp bag swinging over her shoulder.

The color and the design of her choices might change from day to day, but the basic, the polo and jeans and bag are always there. But that date, she decided to wholeheartedly embrace heels.

Heels

High heels, low heels, pumps, platform sandals, no shoes (preferred), with shoes (not so much), loafers, sneakerinas ... she heels bombarded her closet for about a year.

Remember what I said about the garden, leaving no previous interest in plants? She had no previous interest in the heels as well. Her only use for heels might have been for a dinner, but even then it was rare, because it was usually the ubiquitous flats, or the sandals that she would have worn to meetings, or the occasional jelly (there were lots of them).

I enjoyed the heels as well, because this was the time when Girl Power, Spice Girls-induced fervor was spreading across the globe. If I couldn't be one of them, I could borrow my mom's shoes and at least pretend to be them, couldn't I?

Now the thing about her obsessions was that once she lost interest, there was no going back, or going to anything new that resembled a previous point of interest.

The garden was never restored (it didn't resemble its former, boring, self, but it stayed the same there when she just morphed it), so my family thought the shoes would go the same way. But they didn't. She left the heels, yes, but she moved on to another form of footwear: boots.

New obsession

It didn't matter which type (though she drew the line at hooker boots); they were all welcomed to her shoe rack. The heels were given away (some to me, though I'd start wearing them only years later) to make way for flat boots, high boots, cowboy boots of every conceivable color, covered in sequins or snakeskin, worn for every occasion for everyone's eyes to see. Since this obsession has never ended, I'm pretty sure when she was arrested with Tolentino & Co., she was wearing boots.

Many an economist has theorized that raindrops act as a barometer to a country's economic strength: I theorize that my mother's choice of boots acts as an accurate representation of the Philippine economy. It's been ages since she wore the bright red cowboy boots, or the one with sequins; this complies with the oil and rice shortage.

Because she is upbeat, the current president, it is unlikely we will see the gold pair in public (the last time she wore them, my friend remarked, "Wow I know how it feels like to be married to Imee Getrue.") until 2030.

Though she is an Imelda Marcos fan, she is lendible in style. As of writing, her boots add up to 58 pairs. But that's still a lot, when we moved to the new house, much like Mr. Big had no choice but to design for Carrie a bigger closet in the "Sex and the City" movie, my dad had to design for my mother a bigger shoe rack for the boots. I doubt there will ever be a day when the boots stop walking.

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Contributing Editor
Ria Francisco-Prieto

Knowing the hierarchy of scents

KNOCKOUT!

Ria Francisco-Prieto

THE PRICE OF GAS IS SO high, so that before unveiling a press launch I really have to be extra-curious about the product for me to make the drive—thus, and wanting to catch up with old media friends.

Last Wednesday Issey Miyake launched Leau D'Issey, "Reflection in a Drop" Limited Edition 2008, three out of my must-have perfumes in Issey's, I was so excited to be one of the first to experience the new scent.

I find it fascinating that the new scent can be described through its bottle design, which is clean, white, and airy. The design follows Issey Miyake's style—as interpreted nowadays by designer Martine Lebourgeois.

Perfumers create different forms. Most are combinations of natural minerals, es-

MORNING D2

Eat properly to avoid hair loss

ALMONDS

PROPER nutrition and hair care can prevent hair loss.

Protein deficiencies caused by extreme dieting can make hair brittle and dry

Isabel Bacon, Anchorage Press

HAIR LOSS IS A thief in the night. It starts long before you are aware of it. Most thinning is gradual, with the exception of stress-related fallout.

The good news? You don't have to resort to implants or costly hair growth medicines and products. Proper nutrition and hair care can prevent hair loss.

Hair grows in cycles (from follicles set), while others shed or grow). As you age, to growth eventually becomes so thin that you can't see it. Over 25 percent of women over 50 lose more than half of their hair.

Hair loss can also be passed down from either parent's side. Chances are, if your father is bald, you would end up bald, too. Thinning tends to occur through the mid-crown area.

Pregnancy, illness, diseases or any other major stresses can cause you to shed all your curly locks from 2-6 months after the event, although the follicle is temporary, with hair not growing back naturally.

Protein deficiencies caused by extreme dieting can also make hair dry and brittle. Also, tight hairstyles, like braids and ponytails, can put so much tension on follicles that they are ripped out. Once they are gone, there's nothing left to produce new hair.

Repetitive hair stress like brushing and blow-drying can likewise break hair. You have to keep your tresses hydrated and stylish gently.

Don't shampoo your hair too much. Once hair is always a good thing, but too much shampooing can strip it of the nutrients it needs for healthy growth.

Finally, don't use a hair dryer. Your hair is subjected to low air and pulling, which is not good. Hot air strips the strands of moisture, making them brittle and prone to breakage.

ORANGES (or orange juice) are a great source of Vitamin C.

Six foods that help prevent hair loss

Chickpeas. Eating chickpeas is basically killing two birds with one stone. You can get both iron and the vitamin B-6 you need for healthy hair. They plays an important part in building hair proteins, and it is to vitamin well with Vitamin A. A lack of one of these two vitamins causes dandruff, which can contribute to hair loss.

Soy beans. Soy is a great source of protein. It also contains a substantial amount of iron and Vitamin E. Iron is an important part of hemoglobin production, while Vitamin E helps the body absorb oxygen and increases blood circulation to the scalp. Without it, your hair won't grow.

Almonds. Almonds are good sources of vegetarian proteins, iron and Vitamin E. They may also lessen cholesterol, helping you avoid having to take cholesterol-lowering drugs that actually cause hair loss.

Whole wheat. Whole wheat is a good source of Silica and Iron. Silica is very important because it helps with the absorption of many other vitamins and minerals.

Oats. A good source of easily absorbable Iron, as well as Potassium, phosphorus and magnesium.

Oranges. Oranges (or orange juice) are good sources of Vitamin C, which helps make sources of Iron more absorbable. Vitamin C is a big part of the development of collagen, which is necessary for hair growth.

Simplify your skin care regimen

Less is more

Kelly Miles, Photo of The Week

MANY OF US dream of a well-stocked medicine cabinet filled with bottles and jars of creams and serums that promise to clarify, lighten, rejuvenate and smoothen our skin.

Unfortunately, most of the time, piling on different products makes an unbalanced condition of our skin.

Count less evening, myself included, fall for attractive packaging and clever-sounding ingredients. But our skin doesn't need all that stuff to keep it looking great. If your regimen consists of more than five steps, you may be putting too many products on your face.

Each step must be easy, quick and basic. Also, its purpose should be considered in accordance with the other steps. When it comes to our skin, it is good to have a minimalist approach.

Philippine Dermatological Society member Dr. Elaine Bautista-Galvez says that, before establishing a daily regimen, "You must find out your skin type."

It sounds so simple, but many of us go through product after product without taking our skin type into consideration. Apparently, there are four skin types: dry, oily, combination and sensitive skin.

You can identify your skin type by washing your face and observing it after three hours. If your skin feels tight and flaky, then you have dry skin. If you notice that your nose, forehead and cheeks are oily (and you generally have visible pores), you have oily skin.

If there is oil on your t-zone—nose, forehead and chin—and on your cheeks, you have combination skin. And if you are prone to redness and irritation, especially after trying on new skin care products, then you have sensitive skin.

But if your skin is giving you mixed signals you can't decipher, better consult a dermatologist.

Once you know your skin type, you can then streamline your regimen and apply only the products that will benefit your skin. Dr. Bautista-Galvez recommends that your daily skin care regimen should consist of only three steps.

CLEANSE. A cleanser should be able to remove dirt, oil and makeup without drying skin. Choosing the right one will depend on your skin type.

KNOW your skin type

"For dry skin, look for cream, which is a key part of the natural moisturizing factor (NMF), or glycerin also attract to ultimate levels. Humectants that are present in your body detail," says Dr. Bautista-Galvez.

Sensitive skin can benefit from achetin (found naturally in cranberry, blueberry, huckleberry leaves), thermal spring water (which helps to soothe irritation and dry skin), glucosamine to highly moisturizing, non-darkening, natural anti-oxidant), and polyhydroxy acid (which prevents photo-aging).

For oily and combination skin, a power-packed cleanser with ingredients like glycolic, lactic acid, salicylic acid, vitamin C and retinol works best, especially when the pH value of the product is the same as our skin's, which is 5.5.

MOISTURIZE. The right moisturizer for your skin shouldn't feel greasy or heavy, or worse, cause breakouts!

"The best moisturizers have urea in them, which helps exfoliate our skin cells deeply and retain moisture. Also, ingredients like alpha hydroxy acid and glycolic acid help prevent acne and prevent skin from photo damage (which results blemishes and fine wrinkles)," says Dr. Bautista-Galvez.

Again, choosing the product based on your skin type is recommended. For oily skin, using a toner with beta-hydroxy (which softens the top layer of the skin), alpha and beta hydroxy acid, salicylic acid and retinol (which stimulates collagen production) after cleansing can keep skin supple. For sensitive skin, a moisturizer designed for babies can prevent allergic reactions.

PROTECT. A densely used to sunny day may seem hyperbolic, but without exposure, we are exposed to dangerous UV rays that make our skin vulnerable to premature aging. Over time, this can lead to thick, leathery, wrinkly skin, or worse, skin cancer.

"For everyday use, find a sunblock with a minimum sun protection factor (SPF) of 15, and for outdoor activities, especially during summer, the minimum SPF should be 30," suggests Dr. Bautista-Galvez, for UVA and UVB protection, look for ingredients like titanium dioxide, like oxide, sodium zinc, silicylate and oxinoxanate.

For more information or appointments, call Galvez Clinic Skin and Cosmetic Surgery Center at 8429816/8464807 for Buzz Reed Beauty and 8105008 for Metrowalk branch.

Photographer: Noelle Hernandez
Model: Michelle Palmos
Makeup Backup/Clinic of Marbella Diaz
Hair Stacie Mita
for Eight's Stylist Series

Knowing the hierarchy of scents

From page B1

neutral oils from flowers and plants and synthetic products that have been developed the smell and help it last longer.

It is important to know the different forms of perfumes so that you understand why perfumes are more expensive than colognes since the former lasts longer. It is better to invest in perfumes so you don't have to keep on applying it every now and then.

From the highest to the least concentrated, here are the different grades of fragrances:

1. PERFUME. This has almost 15% to 40% essence. It is the purest form of scented product and also the most expensive. Just a dab is needed and you will keep the scent for at least 12 hours.

2. EAU DE PARFUM. Contains about 7% to 15% concentrate. This is the most common perfume and also lasts very long but is less expensive than the concentrate.

3. EAU DE TOILETTE. 1% to 6% concentrate. This is a lighter scent intended to be used in the morning. It doesn't stay on as long so it is advisable to layer with products such as lotions, oils, or soaps of the scent.

4. EAU DE COLOGNE / EAU DE TOILETTE. The lightest of all scents. This is the least expensive although it is actually to be splashed on the body.

To de-stress, try yogal

Malia Evers, Girl about town

PATTY HARN/ Reporter

How do you handle the stress of work and an active social life?

I've been getting into African Yoga lately. It's a type of yoga that's conducted to a heated room, which helps you to stretch more and sweat a lot, too.

The postures are designed to positively affect your internal organs, and the sweating helps flush out toxins. I haven't done a lot of it yet, but so far, after the sessions I've attended, I've felt more relaxed and rejuvenated. I feel cleaner, rinsed up; energized and even my skin has improved.

It's a great way to relax, recharge, de-stress and flush out toxins all at the same time, especially with a lifestyle of late nights and drinking. But a word of warning: It's seriously not for the faint of heart, so be prepared for an extreme session of yoga to the extreme.

PATTY Harn

Easy makeup for rainy days

Muriel Chua, Beauty Is On Top Again

A SHADE OF EYE shadows, a dab of blush and a touch of lipstick are basic tools of the trade.

Here it is—the quite rainy days, this time of the year can be a bit of a struggle when it comes to one's beauty routine. With December's beauty still months away there is little leeway for frivolous beauty spending.

But whether simply running errands, meeting up with over for friends or attending a low-key birthday party, getting decked out and made up every now and then might cheerful results.

For when skies are grey, use one coat as a recipe of products—a dab of blush and a smudge of lipstick to liven up gloomy, tattooed lips.

On your next outing, try the easy, look inspired by Lancôme's latest look but d'Or collection.

1. apply a touch of sparkly pink eyeshadow over all your eyelids. Dot a little extra on the brow bone. The protruding part under your eyebrows). Using the same brush or finger, apply concealer under your eyes. The shimmery pigment left over helps highlight and even out skin.

2. The look uses easy brown contour shadow instead of the usual golden taupe well-loved by many. To mimic this look, sweep on your usual shade of brown from the base of your lashes, up to the crease, and then blend in a bit of pink blush on top of this to create your own pink-brown combo.

3. Depending on where you're going and time of the day, you can adjust the intensity of the look accordingly by using your finger to smudge in gradient. Use a light application for day, and a heavier hand at night to achieve a smoky effect (as seen here).

4. Use blush eyeliner to rim the tops of your lashes. Draw a thicker line on top, and a much thinner one at the bottom, smudging the latter to create a soft line that blends in better with your bottom lashes.

5. Coat eyelashes and sweep on lengthening mascara. Avoid thick, clingy clumpiness, for a natural look.

LUMIÈRE look mixed

LUMIÈRE brow compact

brow trifling Compact in Mahogany Brown.

Lumiere products are available at Rustan's Department stores nationwide (Kandeo cosmetics).

Muriel Chua is the former beauty editor of Cosmopolitan, Inquirer.net and Oh! Magazine. He is now based in New York City. Visit MyMuriel.com.

New products to check aging and wrinkling

BY NOW, EVERY beauty addict who dreads the aging process has heard of SirtiVenix.

That which started out as stretch-mark cream has metamorphosed to been discovered to do wonders for the face, firming it and miraculously effectively getting a good number of facial lines and deep wrinkles.

The plastic ads of SirtiSurvivin's new line of products are so straightforward in addressing skin problems that one cannot help but sit up and take notice.

Rhin Berkes, the maker of SirtiVenix SO, has formulated SirtiVenix Hydrothermal Deep Wrinkle Serums which targets pronounced deep wrinkles, enlarged pores and stubborn surface imperfections such as the "11" (deep furrows between eyebrows making a permanent scowl); nasolabial lines (lines that start at the base of the nose and run down to the edge of lips); the marionette droops (cheeks); and deep horizontal lines at the forehead.

SirtiVenix III is only for those who are willing to make the extra effort to reduce the fine lines and wrinkles because there is an application technique and making sure that your nose might find solitude.

LUMIERA
Face Brightener

Undereye circles

Serious undereye dark circles are done that catch natural forever.

Sylteris was not created for dark lines that are caused by sleepless nights, hyperpigmentation or tiredness sobbing, but it checks the blackened inflamed blood vessels that leak blood and drain through the thin skin of the eyes, making one look old, bruised and haggard.

Hydrolic ventilator, a compound that aids enzyme activity, making the blood seep back into the capillaries and into the system where it belongs as it disappears from the skin's surface. It checks toxin or waste and assists the skin from being drained and eliminated by the lymphatic system.

For Asian skin

The last two star products now soloed in skin lightening or as bleach would love to call whitening.

The difference between a photo of us at 28 compared to that at 38 is skin luminosity.

There are no visible lines in mine; women just yet but the face is obviously older because constant exposure to the elements combined with personal stress makes the skin dull and lifeless with a yellowish/brown or even a grayish cast.

Lumiella Metal Brightener is designed to be used on the entire face to help restore the youthful color of the skin, which has a delicate and even translucent.

The brightness scale is increased, making our skin reflect light, look dimmer and more luminous. Skin color is enhanced so we are not dependent on foundation, concealer and powder to look radiant and younger.

The best part: it promises obvious results to 28 days. It is also safe for pregnant women.

Asian age spots

Lumiella Hyperpigmented Age Spot removes is designed to remove another roadblock to having positively smooth skin: melasma, freckles and age spots, to which Asian women are more prone due to age, high concentration of the pigment melanin, and/or excessive exposure to the harsh rays of the sun.

With more women the spots appear mainly on their hands first as they are very conscious of possessing their face.

Lumiella was originally designed for the Manila but more women are applying it on the face especially those who have spots due to hormonal changes.

A two-month study 95 per cent of the women applying the product on one hand reported an obvious improvement compared to the hand treated with placebo.

Rhin Berkes' products are available at Rustan's, Rustan's Makati, Rustan's or Echo Shangri-La Plaza, Alabang Town Center and Marketmarket at SM Mall of Asia.

MAKEOVER 911

Kissy Sakar

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New treatment offers effective peeling without side effects

By Nonna Capili
Contributor

THE INSIDE FOR beautiful skin knows no age, gender, or occupation. And the increasing trend, especially with those that have more to spare, is undergoing treatments.

Peeling treatments in particular are the favorite of many dermatological consumers. It's also the most frequently recommended treatment for quickly achieving the desired results.

Last July 23, Physicians' Care Alliance Skin and Clinical Care Products, a new alternative and development to peeling treatments and skincare was formally launched in Manila. PCA Skin was established 20 years ago in Scottsdale. It expanded years later, after strong products across the United States and internationally.

Jennifer Linder, MD, a board-certified dermatologist who also holds a clinical faculty position at the Dermatology Department of the University of California, San Francisco, flew in the Philippines to launch and educate local dermatologists on PCA Skin.

"The goal is to get healthy skin," Linder says. As opposed to other philosophies, she says healthy skin, not beautiful skin, is the preference because "achieving healthy skin is how you get beautiful skin."

Comprehensive

She explains that PCA Skin delivers three other brands and skincare lines because it offers comprehensive solutions, having product lines that respond to different skin types (sensitive skin, sensitive and oily skin, skin with pigmentation, sensitive skin with pigmentation, acne, occasional acne, and aging for oily-and-very-oily skin).

Since PCA Skin is only available through certified dermatologists, the product lines have also been specially designed to help both the consumer and physician to better identify the patient's need.

Another unique aspect to the products is how it is "progressive rather than aggressive," Linder says.

If one has ever been recommended for peeling treatments, then one would know of the downside to a serious and traumatic peeling session...the deliberate burning of the skin to induce skin renewal. That process, forget work or school, or any public place for a couple of days. Staying at home or downstairs to recover from the burn, itch and flaking of the skin. But every person has the luxury of time for that.

"The word 'peel,' is almost like a misnomer. Because what's happening is you're triggering cellular damage on the inside of the cells in terms of getting the cells to a healthier place."

A peeling session with the product line would not result in burnt skin that sings. Instead, a patient can readily go back to his or her regular schedule and fine peeling or flaking will come only three days after the session.

Optimum results

To achieve optimum results in treatment, active ingredients are applied to the skin after the pigments (like burnt sugar) are lifted.

"If you take one of the PCA peels, which work hand-in-hand with the home-care products, the skin is pigment is lifted and when the skin is opened up by the peel, that's when you can put specific actives in to nurture change," says Linder.

She also recommends that peeling sessions like these be performed a series of times to get steady changes and results, rather than one major treatment which may end up in side effects. The frequency of special peels differs with cases.

Linder says that roughly, patients being treated with hyper-pigmentation should get treatments every three weeks, patients with acne-prone tissues four weeks, and for anti-aging every month.

"It really depends though with what you are having treated. That's why having a dermatologist performing the treatments is very important," she says.

The PCA Skin home-care products and peeling treatments vary in ingredients (peeling treatments alone have 14 different blends like lactic acid, salicylic acid, kojic acid, trichloroacetic acid and change for different sensitive purposes.

Daring to ask has its rewards, that's why year after year, our reporters, writers and photographers have been recognized by the most prestigious journalistic groups.

INQUIRER

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FOR METRO MANILA ONLY

Real People enjoying great meals from McDonald's Delivery Service

Since 2002, McDonald's Delivery Service (MDS) has touched and reached the lives of millions of Filipinos. And in 2006, customers at home or at work have enjoyed great meals from McDonald's delivered wherever and whatever time of day, seven days a week! Here are the stories of real people who have experienced the McDonald Delivery Service that amidst their busy lifestyles and schedules have grown accustomed to calling 8-MCDO.

Josh Sotto,
DJ for Magic 89.9

The days and nights can be long for women who works for an FM radio station. Then again, work isn't really work for Josh Sotto of 89.9 FM with the shows of late who visit and call the station. Selecting and playing good music in a day's work isn't all that bad. Josh has always been the resident DJ even when he was still in college in La Salle. During those times, he makes sure that come to or Magic 89.9 during the wee hours of the day get to hear the evening music to keep them up and going while the rest of the world is asleep.

Josh keeps himself constantly energized with his favorite Egg McMuffin, which McDonald's brings to his DJ booth he is so frustrated in it. Manduluong City DJ Josh Sotto dresses this with McDonald's Premium Roast Coffee, the perfect caffeine boost to keep him and his music going 'til dawn.

"A McDonald's delivery guy is one of my regular visitors at the booth. Nothing beats having a quick meal delivered straight to your place were in really cold here's. I call 8-MCDO and within minutes, my Egg McMuffin is ready for eating. Only McDonald's Delivery Service can keep up with my crazy work hours!" says Josh.

Trina Domingo, Model

The world of modelling women young men and women to face the crowds and the camera with a happy smile. That same smile she flashes the world for the camera let that moment is the same smile she has when she is greeted by the McDonald's delivery man who comes up to her with her favorite burgers.

She was even surprised that during an out-of-town shoot, the delivery service was available! *"I was surprised that I can actually order from McDonald's even in the province. Now, I don't have to worry about where I can get my meals outside of the city. thanks to McDonald's."*

Trina also vividly remembers her student days in La Salle, when she already had the McDonald's Delivery Service hotline memorized. The great tasting meals came very handy for her especially when she was finishing her thesis and studying towards a degree in Psychology. Trina always had McDonald's Cheeseburgers that are made from 100% pure beef and fries to munch on; getting her the energy to stay awake and stay at her creative best.

"Even if I shop over at friends' houses, when said I always be a McDonald's nearby for a quick delivery. We never have to wait. I mean how can you go wrong with 8-MCDO," says Trina. McDonald's student-friendly prices were especially prized by her and her classmates. *"It's great to have my favorite cheeseburger delivered to where I am- without blowing a hole in my pocket,"* she recalls.

Jamie Lacson,
4th year UST
Advertising Student

Like many students, 19-year old Jamie finds smart and quick working on her school assignments in the evening when everyone is home is asleep. For a fourth year advertising student from UST, the McDonald's Delivery Service has been an important part of her college life.

"My parents won't allow me to go out and buy food at night for fear and her classmates in mind-set. Here was only one solution: call 8-MCDO!" says Jamie.

It was easy and convenient for Jamie because the McDonald's affordable meals are brought to her home in Pinatubo City. Along with her friends/roommates Mac Anne, Jessa, Geraldine, Jasmine, and Fiona, Jamie enjoys no McChicken to Chicken McNuggets and Coke- to keep everybody fuelled through the night and ready for school the next day. The only is Jamie happy for previous on-site.

"It is really very affordable for students like me," adds Jamie.

Manny Gabutina,
Graphics Producer

As a graphics producer for a giant TV network, Manny has the gigantic task of keeping his team energized, creative and happy because they are always working round the clock. Manny keeps a very busy schedule and the ongoing taping/interviews the team even busier.

"When you're editing and you have a lot of people working with you, you can't take any breaks," he explains. *"Otherwise, that will big down the production schedule."*

This is why Manny relies on McDonald's Delivery Service to feed his team of graphics editors and production personnel. *"McDonald's has good food, fast delivery and accommodating personnel. The best thing is that they always give us the complete condiments without asking. Like the ketchup, gravy and barbecue sauce. I love McDo because they don't mess up our long list of orders."*

"McDonald's Delivery Service saves the whole team precious time. We no longer have to leave our production studios to get our meals. It's the ultimate convenience for people who work long hours to meet deadlines," he said. *"And it is a great pondering for my late wife, Jolina, Joanne, Jig and Ester!"*

J. Angelo Racoma,
Blogger and
Website Developer

Angelo is a bachelor single and also keeps the midnight oil burning.

Once he sits in front of the computer, there is nothing that can disturb him anymore. For more than three years now, Angelo has made his presence felt and loud in the blogosphere.

He serves as the editor- in -chief of Splashpoint Media, a new media company that runs blogs, social networks and consultancy services. He also runs his personal technology blog at http://racoma.com.ph, which is among the most frequently visited blogs in the Philippines. To maximize his readership, he regularly updates his blog with the latest news and insights in the field of economics and technology.

For blogger Mac Angelo who runs his office at home, McDonald's Delivery Service is perfect. *"Whenever I feel hungry, I pick up the phone and dial the number from memory. Each time I call 8-MCDO, the guy on duty already knows what I want – a McDonald's Quarter Pounder with Cheese for me and Chicken McNuggets meals for my wife and kid. Among those times they're still up! – and when to bring it,"* he says.

Thanks to McDonald's effective use of technology, customers and bloggers like Angelo can get their meals fast. With their up-to-date databases, customers do not have to waste time explaining each things as they have all been already entered.

"McDonald's has become part of my blogging routine. Through its delivery service, I have definitely become more efficient and productive."

Stacy Rodriguez,
Fashion Designer

Stacy is a big (saying Marsh) is the flesh. She is a staple in the entertainment parties and the most happening events. With both after birth, Stacy goes back to McDonald's where she would have her favorite meals in the company of friends and family.

With ultra-tight schedules, Stacy's loyalty to McDonald's has not waned. It has actually grown stronger with the reliability that the delivery service offers. Stacy especially loves the McChicken.

McDonald's has been her comfort food since childhood and it has evolved on until now. Having McDonald's is a great reward for her after hours of hard work. *"Not only also is save me precious time and gas, McDonald's Delivery Service makes sure that I feel rewarded by getting my favorite meals with just one call. Even if I have to go on one of those locations, McDonald's can deliver exactly what I want when I want. I don't even have to labor a fortune on gas and parking. What's more dinner is also, what delivery service is prompt and efficient allowing me to meet my deadlines easily."*

Tess Lacuesta,
Mother of Two

Tess is a mother of two who is always busy with her children's activities. Her husband is also a busy man who is always on the road. Tess is always on the go and finds it hard to prepare meals for her family. Thanks to McDonald's Delivery Service, Tess can now order delicious meals for her family with just a phone call.

"I am a working mother and I have a very busy schedule. I don't have the time to prepare meals for my family. Thanks to McDonald's Delivery Service, I can now order delicious meals for my family with just a phone call. I can also order meals for my children's parties. It is very convenient and affordable," she says.

Ivy Aguirre,
Actress

Ivy is a busy actress who is always on the go. She is always busy with her shows and commitments. Ivy finds it hard to prepare meals for herself and her family. Thanks to McDonald's Delivery Service, Ivy can now order delicious meals for herself and her family with just a phone call.

"I am a busy actress and I have a very busy schedule. I don't have the time to prepare meals for myself and my family. Thanks to McDonald's Delivery Service, I can now order delicious meals for myself and my family with just a phone call. I can also order meals for my children's parties. It is very convenient and affordable," she says.

"McDonald's Delivery Service saves the whole team precious time. We no longer have to leave our production studios to get our meals. It's the ultimate convenience for people who work long hours to meet deadlines."

In 2002, McDonald's Delivery Service was launched in the country. McDelivery was the first to offer 24/7 service in Metro Manila in 2005 and in Cebu in 2007.

Now in 2008 McDonald's is continuously expanding their reach to cover more areas nationwide. McDonald's aspires to customers more than just good affordable food but convenience as well- with excellent and efficient deliveries make 80 minutes from the first call.

With its delivery service, McDonald's brings great meals to real people "anytime, anywhere."

LIFESTYLE Fashion & Beauty

MEASURE AND SEE. 2 TONES FAIRER*

Afternoon tea in style

AHHH. Sugar kits goes for contrast in tastes of color and textures.

HOW DOES ONE dress up for an afternoon tea party? Especially if the highlight is a fashion show in the posh Makati Shangri-La?

In these wanton times, there are no hard-and-fast rules.

A long printed dress can be as elegant as an all-black ensemble accessed by a graphic statement bag. And no matter that it's summer (in the West, at least), one is the best time to slip into a pair of

AFTERNOON 02

A PANOA bag gives Ruby Rojo's monochrome all-black look some punch.

LEICA Carpe channels summer with shimmer-laden pieces that exude a youthful appeal.

JOEY Mead puts a Western touch to the Baleo look with a pair of brown leather boots.

Fluid and hang-loose look

By Alex T. Vergara

WASHABLE NEED NOT BE SYNONYMOUS WITH boring as Kate Lanvel showed in last Tuesday's resumption of Fashion Week at Makati Shangri-La.

Produced by Jane Bates and sponsored by Nokia, Belo Essentials, Global Datacipic and Metrobank Premier Visa, the series will run almost every week from August-November, Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, at the lobby lounge.

Going yards upon yards of voile and silk charmeuse,

FLARED 03

DESPITE the absence of color, this long dress achieves enough drama through volume.

DROP-CROTCH linen pants and a draped shrug lend the look a retro vibe.

LAYERS of soft voile provide an idea counterpoint to the beaded bra top.

BY calling attention to the waist by means of a belt, the wearer need not worry in all that voluminous linen.

LOOSE, high-waisted pants (and pencil skirts) are hard to resist.

SILK charmeuse fabric reveals Laurel's clothes with enough lessons and volume.

Fluid and hang-loose look

A "DRAPE-Y" number exciting from the designer's play on geometric shapes

Rajo Laurel's Fashion Watch collection is figure-friendly despite the volume

From page E1

Laurel played with geometric shapes to produce a 40-piece ready-to-wear collection, emanating mostly of pleated, gathered and flared dresses, and separates in neutral and earth tones.

Apart from being figure-friendly, the clothes have something for their volume, since plenty and their lines. To be not too predictable, Laurel emphasized the waist in some dresses and separates, using asymmetrical hems and sashes with the collection's trademark appliques inspired by agates and other semiprecious stones.

Otherwise, the designer silenced majority of the pieces, including drop-crotch silk and laminated linen pants (a firmer version of MC Hammer's baggy trousers), to simply hang loose.

Variations in workwear—from the V to the U, from brass to sweetheart—as well as a juxtaposition of contrasting silhouettes in one outfit were also evident.

Laurel also borrowed liberally from the 1960s—high-waisted pants and shirts paired effortlessly with sunglass or peplum tops. In lieu of shoulder pads, he considered some strapless top with semi-draped shrugs for a softer, more defined look.

Drapery

His choice of materials, particularly silk charmeuse, worked well with his objective to produce a "drape-y" collection for fall warriors. Otherwise, a number of pieces might prove to be too voluminous and overpowering for petty Pinoys.

Perhaps to draw attention to the clothes, Laurel made his models wear identical open-toed shoes. The footwear and accessories are available at the House of Laurel.

His use of cutout shades—gauzing colors similar to the tie-dye look—worked well to certain pieces, including tops and short dresses, but failed when it came to two numbers.

The pair of semi-beaded long dresses wasn't bad in themselves. They simply stood out in the evening ensemble in a collection dominated by soft, shimmery with conventional silhouettes.

Obvious references to ancient Greece and the American frontiers were fine, but pairing Brylcreemed ponytail to those headed and gladiating numbers proved to be a bit of a stretch. It was as if the pieces belonged to a different collection.

It would also do the local fashion scene some good if the likes of Laurel and other young yet seasoned designers exert more effort to get out of their comfort zone.

As it was, he could position such a pretty and figure-flattering collection with his eyes closed.

In a whole, though, Fashion Watch's onslaught over colorfashion shows, which Laurel recently staged, is another one again evident. By highlighting the work of a particular designer, the series, apart from letting us in the clothes, allows the individual to focus purely on his work.

Freed from the fear of looking too "simple" now to a rel. league's collection, the beloved talent tests to steer clear of gimmickry and produce wearable clothes that showcase his strengths as an artist.

The tendency to go overboard and resort to fantasy creations just to outshine the competition is, thus, avoided. In the end, not only the designer, but viewers in general are all the better for it.

RAJO Laurel and his muses take a bow.

RAJO channels the 1980s in this white peplum top with overlapping collars and loose-fitting pants.

CHIC! shades add drama to an otherwise simple dress with a low V-cut and short sleeves.

Afternoon tea in style

From page E1

BY looking her best to one color, Mia Ayesa transforms a simple shift into her idea of casual chic.

JOANNE Zapanta. Andrada sticks to black-and-white prints.

Fashion's new 'it' label

THE NEWEST ADDITION to Steven Specialties, Inc.'s (SSI) growing family of premier fashion brands, Hogan promises to bring style and function with its collection of shoes and bags. High quality, design and functionality are the basic characteristics of the brand.

Hogan's shoes and bags are the result of an advanced research for its Autumn-Winter 2008 women's collections, it's all about the fresh journey in search of new synergies while carrying on its heritage and tradition.

For shoes, fine materials including nappa, suede, patent and velvet in rich colors of brandy, chestnut, sage, plum, fuchsia and navy exude luxuriousness.

Intricate details of enamel, strass, sequin embellishment, and mixing of textures are inspired from street wear mixed with vintage elements. Urban lace-up or polished brogue with fringe draw its inspiration from the Oxford shoe style.

LINE Hogan Models Suede Boots

MEN'S Sneakers Hi-top Mod Polis

Her bags, the classic this season includes leather textured flo tob, zipped front, worn contrasted with practical detailsm like adjustable double side buckles and extra pockets.

Hogan's men's line for the coming Autumn-Winter collection reveals the sophisticate appeal of the brand with classic shapes, formal elevation and sharp cuts with surprising details.

Key look for the season is shoe made with hi-tech fabric combined in matte and laminated leather in warm autumn undertones or with shocking accents of citrus and purple.

For the preppy style maker, hi-top sneakers in enameled leather are hip pieces to finish a bow dress, allows the individual to focus purely on his work.

STORIC! Tracolla Bandolera Grande Handbag

WOMEN'S Cup Sport—Olympia Leather Pallottola Shearse Shoes

dapper group. The feather light Hogan Olympia Sole in Chrome boot and brogue with buckle strap or lace up is the perfect choice for the city gentleman.

In the Philippines, Hogan is exclusively distributed by SSI and is at Fusion's Department Store Makati.

Swiss luxury brand gets cozy with the Philippines

By Charles V. Moral

AT THE RATE LUXURY always are multiplying, it's hard for the skeptic not to raise a brow and ask, "Is the state of the economy really as bad as the headlines make it out to be?"

In just six months, the Swiss luxury label Mont Blanc has opened new boutiques in Manila—last December at Rustan's Makati, and recently an even bigger space at Shangri-La Mall in Mandaluyong. The latter is one of Rustan's targeted the local franchisee to the 102-year-old brand in 2001.

"Let's take a macro look," said King Chow, regional marketing director of Mont Blanc Asia-Pacific. "A Goldman Sachs research forecasts China to overtake Japan as the biggest luxury consumer by 2015... Our strategy is 'Think small.' In 2005 Mont Blanc China took over the business from our [retail operator] and expanded to 180 boutiques in China and [Hong Kong] alone."

But how does the Philippines fit into the equation?

"Mont Blanc is a global brand," Chow stated. "Our customers are well educated, successful and have power. They can travel to international cities, and one of them is Manila. So we don't just focus on China. We keep a balanced strategy."

To date, the brand, mainly known for writing instruments and which has diversified from luxury watches, fine jewelry and leather goods, has 130 Mont Blanc-owned points of sales in Asia, with 200 more run by retail partners.

"We got hit [by the slump] but luckily, it's not as serious as in the United States," Chow said. "Two years ago, we were faced with the same thing where we introduced our watches. But as a reputable European company, we have a commitment to provide quality products. After 10 years we now see the fruit. The watch making industry is one to three times higher than the average growth rate. We look for long-term investment. We can't stop just because of the downturn."

In the Philippines, he said, Mont Blanc sales demand is the last three years "because of its limited distribution." As to its strategy in all Asian cities, Mont Blanc closed its small retail corners and opened boutiques in their stead. "There's no use in having many if the quality isn't good. Mr. [Hervé] Turenne is supporting us and we see that we have a good future in the coming years."

Mont Blanc is now counting the female market with the recent introduction of products for women, all of which are available locally. Previously, 30-60 percent of the Mont Blanc customers were women, according to Chow, who would buy gifts for the men in their life. Then silver jewelry was created for women. Last year, the fine jewelry line was launched, following the unveiling of its patented diamond cut, the Mont Blanc trio, at the brand's centenary in 2006. For this purpose, it had signed on high-profile celebrities like Renée Zellweger as spokesperson.

But with many other luxury brands release handbags in watch, fine jewelry or leather goods, how would Mont Blanc, whose core heritage is writing instruments, compete?

"What we offer here just a pen or a watch," Chow said. "When we sell in here. No one buys a pen in writing, or is ready to sell him. What we offer is emotional appeal. People buy watches or pens to reward themselves. There's an instrument or one that can be retained and passed on to generations. It's not like fashion [that's disposable]. We try to offer uniqueness with limited-edition products and collector's pieces." Limited-edition Mont Blanc still sell like hot cakes, he said, but in this, the top seller is its watches.

And if people bring it cream or manner of they're now saying: "Ten years ago, that was a valid point of concern [for Chow]," Chow said. "Now they've more sophisticated. They have the ability to appreciate craftsmanship. They ask more questions [when] compared to Europeans or Americans. They have more time to support their buying decisions."

Chow added, "Asians have their own appreciation of luxury goods. They want to own because they want to show that they've reached the status."

WATCHES are Mont Blanc's best-selling products in Asia. PHOTOS BY ROEL AGCAOILI

TO COURT the female market, Mont Blanc unveils its image as a masculine brand with the introduction of women's fine jewelry.

CUSTOMERS are Mont Blanc pens not merely as writing instruments but as precious items, much like jewelry, that they can pass on to their children.

KING Chow, regional marketing director of Mont Blanc Asia-Pacific.

What women want

WHAT DO WOMEN WANT? THAT'S the age-old question that baffled our dads to modern men that continues to remain unanswered despite the world's great progress in science, technology and culture.

This August, the SM Department Store's What Women Want promotion does not attempt to answer the question, but rather indulge women in new things that they aspire for—looking good and feeling great.

Women will not only enjoy up to 50% off great selections in ladies' wear, shoes, bags and accessories, but can also take home an expandable canvas tote free for every P1,000 purchase in these departments.

More treats await you as you shop: every P1,000 purchase from the ladies' department entitles you to a one-day pass from Fitness First. This promo runs until Aug. 18 at the SM Department Stores in North EDSA, Fairview, Southmall, Pampanga, and the Mall of Asia. Likewise, until Aug. 15, you can avail of a P500 coupon from Watsons for every P1,000 purchase at the ladies' department of selected SM stores.

And while you're doing your shopping, it will be a good time to check out the corporate clothes at SM. High on boardroom buzz, great on style, these clothes will give you the credit to get ahead in the corporate world.

Ranging from sleek suits for high-profile dressing, to striped and solid dress shirts that bring a wonderful shot of color to a desk-working day, to jewel-colored silk tops with a feminine vibe, in Little Black Dresses that will see you from corporate appointments to cocktails, these clothes work wonders.

With great bargains all around you, it's also the best time to match these great buys with stylish shoes, handy handbags and totes, and underwear accessories to complement your new look.

The corporate collection is available at the Ladies Wear Department of all SM stores.

KHAKI cropped baby-doll jacket and khaki pants

HUGGING UP Khaki and white-striped long-sleeved top with ruffle accents worn with khaki pants.

BROWN puffed-sleeved satin top worn with khaki pants.

LONG WAY TO GO Lavender tube-knit top worn with high-waisted black pants.

CAREER SHOT Gray sleeveless shift dress with belt and front pockets detailing.

BLACK quarter-sleeved jacket with wide collar and big buttons detailing.

"Zunic treatments feel good. And they work!

Effects are instant. They're the new way of enhancing your body figure! ❞

Authentic Customer Statement - April 24 (not a paid endorsement)

Like so many satisfied clients before her, this lady discovered how Zunic's advanced technology can work where diet and exercise fail, and when painful surgery, pills and injections are not an option.

The secret? Research groups at NASA and the Mayo Clinic recently discovered medical applications that led to the development of new technologies that remove unwanted fat faster and safer, with minimum fuss.

Zunic uses the latest equipment that embodies these technologies, and all treatments are performed by qualified, highly-trained medical staff. This is how Zunic clients can lose unwanted kilos (and centimeters) without having to diet, exercise, take pills, suffer injections, or undergo painful surgery.

Zunic's unique Slimming and Body Sculpting Method™ can accelerate slow metabolisms and literally melt away layers of fat beneath the skin, shaping and toning your body the way you want it to look.

Results are commonly visible (and measurable) in as little as 45 minutes. Treatments are conducted while you stretch out comfortably on a plush couch, without the sweating, anxiety, and pain associated with traditional slimming methods.

That's why Zunic is the preferred choice of busy executives, full-time moms, frequent travelers, expatriates, and people whose medical conditions prevent them from exercising, undergoing surgery, or taking appetite suppressants.

Visit us today for a free, confidential consultation. We're open from 8 am to 8 pm, Monday to Sunday!

Zunic
slimming & body sculpting

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Filinvest Corporate City, Alabang

MAKATI
752-0600 or 752-0601
(0917) 812-0600
LG/F Somerset Olympia
7813 Makati Avenue, Makati City

QUEZON CITY
374-0600 or 374-0600
(0917) 814-0600
G/F Sawyerpop Building
80 Timog Avenue, Quezon City

SM Exclusive travel benefits for Advantage Prestige members

Philam Insurance Company, Inc., one of the largest insurance companies in the Philippines, has once again teamed up with the **SM Advantage Loyalty Program** to provide upgraded personal accident and travel coverages for SM Advantage Prestige members who accumulate a minimum of 100 points.

Exclusive insurance benefits for SM Advantage Prestige members

- Up to Php150,000 Upgraded Personal Accident Insurance. Grants cash benefits for losses caused by death or injury due to accident for one year.
- Up to Php2,500,000 Upgraded Travel Personal Accident Insurance. Provides coverage to an SM Advantage Prestige member traveling anywhere outside the Philippines up to a maximum of 15 days.
- Travel Inconvenience Benefits. Up to a maximum of 15 days each time the insured travels within one year of enrollment:
  - ✓ **Reimbursement for Loss/ Damage to Baggage up to Php 20,000** while traveling outside the Philippines.
  - ✓ **Medical Expense Reimbursement** for reasonable and customary expenses incurred due to sickness and accidents suffered while traveling up to Php 5,000.
  - ✓ **Reimbursement for every 12-Hour Flight Delay** up to Php 1,000.
  - ✓ **Reimbursement for every 12-Hour Luggage Delay** up to Php 1,000.
  - ✓ **24-Hour Emergency Hotline Access while traveling – just call (632) 687-8500.**

now!

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As an SM Advantage Prestige Cardholder, you get P150,000 Personal Accident Insurance which automatically UPGRADES to P2,500,000 when you travel. These and more Travel Inconvenience coverages for only ***40 points!***

No registration needed. SM Advantage Prestige members who are between 18 to 70 and have a minimum balance of 100 points are automatically eligible!

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(maximum of 15 days. Unlimited number of trips in a year!)

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SM Advantage members who do not wish to avail of the offer may opt out via any of the following methods:

- Call Philam's Hotline at (02) 526-5252.
- Fill out and submit the form available at the SM Department Store Customer Service Counter.

Philam Insurance will be delighted to hear from you! Call Philam Hotline at (02) 526-5252 for your inquiries.

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*The ad is only a general description of coverages and is not a statement of policy. All coverages are subject to the terms and conditions of the actual policy.

ELIGIBILITY

SM Advantage Prestige members aged 18 to 70 years who have a minimum of 100 points shall automatically be covered by Philam Insurance for the upgraded personal accident and travel insurance. A basic payment of 40 points will be automatically deducted from every qualified member's point balance.

Members who are currently not eligible because they have less than 100 points will be included in the program when they reach the required points balance.

Review and consideration of eligibility of succeeding members will be done every 10th of each month and eligibility of coverage will commence on the 16th of the same month.

Philam Insurance Company, Inc. ranks among the top non-life insurance companies in the country and is a member of the Philam Group of Companies which includes Philam Life, Philam Care, Philam Plans, AIG Philam Savings Bank, Philam Asset Management, Philam Properties, Philam Equitable Life Assurance Company and Philam Call Center.

The Philam Group of Companies belongs to the world's leading international insurance and financial services organizations, the American International Group, Inc. (AIG).

American International Group, Inc. (AIG), a world leader in insurance and financial services, is the leading international insurance organization with operations in more than 130 countries and jurisdictions. AIG companies serve commercial, institutional and individual customers through the world's most extensive worldwide property-casualty and life insurance networks of any insurer. In addition, AIG companies are leading providers of retirement services, financial services and asset management around the world. AIG's common stock is listed on the New York Stock Exchange, as well as the stock exchanges in Ireland and Tokyo.

LIFESTYLE Fashion & Beauty

Triumph in Beijing

Lingerie giant Triumph holds a global design competition in the run-up to the Olympics

By Glenna Aguino
Contributor

AS CHINA PREPARES TO MAKE ITS BOW unto the world stage, Triumph International, one of the world's largest underpinnery manufacturers, held the grand finals of its global undergarment design competition—Triumph Inspiration Award '08—in Beijing.

It was an coincidence that it took place in the run-up to the Olympics in Beijing. Triumph's fashion and design competitions have long been associated with a broad involvement in the area of sport, especially for women.

The Triumph Inspiration Award, inaugurated this year, invited students from prestigious international design schools to create a conceptual ensemble that can be worn (always tasteful, of course) and, at the same time, showcase the brand's lingerie and swimwear.

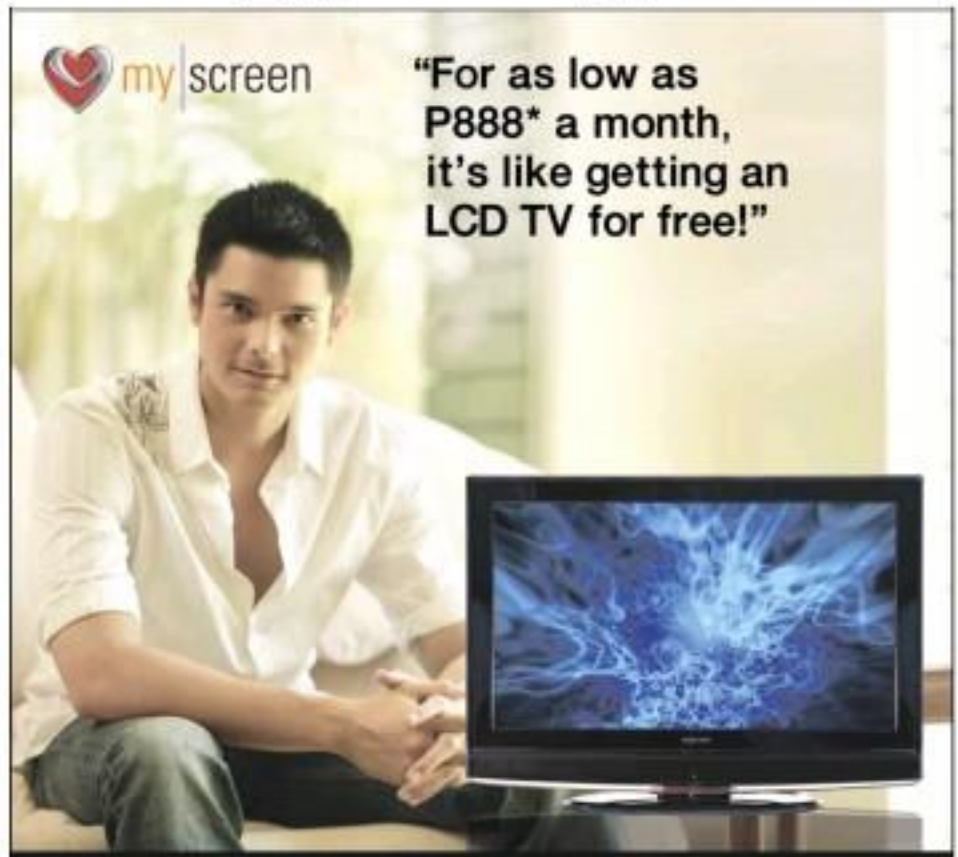
HOOD, wearing sleepless set made from cape and silk chiffon by Ralph Michael Ng, Philippines

WINNING entries. Second place Germany, first place Japan, third place Norway

Thirty-one winning entries from national competitions held in 70 design schools in different countries made it to the Beijing finals.

The competition challenged the students to explore the wonderful facets of undergarments. They had even to interpret the dreams theme Wonder Fascination, and come up with a design that could be translated into a commercial garment, produced in a limited edition, and sold in selected Triumph stores worldwide.

A young and impressionable student from



GARFIELD — BY JIM DAVIS

AL UNLAN — BY JEG HERESA

TULDOK — BY MARK COLL

PUGAD BABOY — BY PH. JUNIOR

DIVINE COMEDY — BY STEVEN PAGULAYAN

MANSONGSONGS — BY JOHNJO TEJIDO

SALAMIN — BY CARLO PEREZ

BABY BLUES — BY JERRY SCOTT

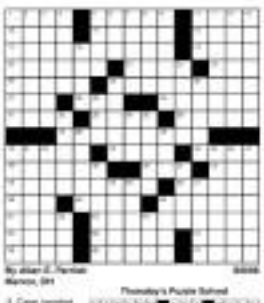
ATOMO AND WEBBY — BY LYRA GARCELLANO

LOVEMORE — BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

KIKO MACHINE — BY MARK ARCENA

BEN — BY DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Adam G. Farmer

Thursday's Puzzle Solved

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DIMAS

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis SudoKu — By Dave Green

	6		5		3		8	
9				1				4
			6		9			
1		7				3		9
	2						6	
6		8				7		5
			9		2			
4				5				6
	7		3		4		1	

Difficulty Level ★★★★

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and programs at www.cuddles.com

Answer to previous puzzle

9	8	7	3	6	2	1	4	5
1	2	6	4	5	7	9	3	8
5	4	3	1	9	8	6	7	2
2	7	9	6	4	3	8	5	1
3	1	8	2	7	5	4	9	3
6	5	4	9	8	1	7	2	6
7	6	5	8	3	9	2	1	4
8	9	1	5	2	4	3	6	7
4	3	2	7	1	6	5	8	9

Triumph in Beijing

To new page F1

the School of Art and Design, St. Botolph College, Ralph Michael Ng, won the (Philippines)' entry. His interpretation of the theme, Female Fluorescence, was a sensual, light, and dreamy showpiece made from fine rosewood capiz and silk chiffon.

The winning pieces were presented to an illustrious jury composed of the brilliant design team of Victor and Rolf; model and photographer Helena Christensen; German fashion and commercial photographer of the popular Guess ad campaigns, Ellen von Unwerth; Sarah, head buyer and creative director of the fashion concept store Colette; Lu Yan, top Chinese model; and Jan Rosenberg, global head of international sales and marketing of Triumph International.

Interaction

"The Triumph Inspiration Award triggers fruitful interaction between the fashion house Triumph and young up-and-coming fashion designers from all over the world. This campaign integrates our great fashion expertise and supports young hopefuls," said Rosenberg.

By requiring "outsiders" to take a fresh look at a brand that has been around for the last 130 years with a history of lingerie as functional object, and from here, design new forms using creativity and personal aesthetic expression, Triumph marks a new age of diversity and aesthetic pluralism.

We are living in an age where design should make life enjoyable. If Triumph promised functionality, durability, and silicone then, its design ideology now brings pleasure, freedom, escape, fantasy, and yes, beauty.

It far more personal and fluid ideal, it is the lingerie that must fit the women, whatever she may be, wherever she may be.

"What we have found is the fact that the students were asked to free themselves of the commercial side of things—almost no restrictions were put on their creativity," said designers Victor & Rolf.

Today's lingerie market is a demanding consumers market, and women don't just have one look, there are so many options.

Even women with tried-and-tested tastes will seek variety some time. Just look at the power of fashion to adapt and evolve. We express ourselves easily to provide fixation but give pleasure, grant our wishes and desires.

What an expressive age ours is. It is an age of look and feel that challenges us to think differently about form and function. Buying underwear today is like buying a mini dress. It is a designer experience.

Winners

The top three winners: Japan, Germany and Norway demonstrated this new art, thanks to the delight of a predominantly female audience composed of designers, artists, news correspondents, retailers, and producers.

What a spectacular Triumph lingerie can walk show the finalists came up with. It was every visual merchandiser's dream. It had the predominantly female audience pleasantly hooked and enthralled.

The winners will be invited to Hong Kong to meet a design team who will work out all the details, perfect approaches, raw materials, and finalize the winning work for further product development.

In 2009, the commercial interpretation of the winning design will be sold in select Triumph stores with the winner's name and concept on the hang tags.

On top of this, the winner gets euro 25,000 in prize money. The awards were held in the Shun Xi, Beijing's Soho, an area that's home to the most relevant contemporary art making in the world today.

The Da Shan Xi area was built up in the '50s as part of a joint China-East Germany program for a military arms factory complex.

The buildings were designed to withstand strong earthquakes and let in as much natural light as possible. In the late 1980s the factories were gradually vacated until the buildings began to be taken over by Beijing's art community.

Today, one of its buildings, Factory Hall 706 (Immortalized's National House for the duration of the Olympics) was the setting for a sizzling carnival show. Who would have thought that this complex of brick and steel buildings done in the cold and detached Bauhaus architectural style during the Cultural Revolution, would be the venue for an inspiring international competition on intimate design?

What graceful irony to, post-Mao, pre-Olympic Beijing! This is the triumph of our age.

ONE OF the showpieces at the Triumph Inspiration Award: International Finals

TRIUMPH Inspiration Award local judge Noel Cruzcosa, 3rd runner-up Khristine Muhlach and model Khiny Alarcenas

JUDGES Randy Ortiz, Gary Ealgbak, Noel Cruzcosa, Hiedi Sorensen, Khiny Alarcenas with 3rd runner-up Belle Flores, managing director of Triumph Philippines Dieter Bereiter, model Ana Sidnea, winner Ralph Ng, model Ann Casas and 2nd runner-up Cleenah Rivera

RALPH Ng and his model Ana Sidnea

JAN Rosenberg, global head, sales and marketing

RANDY Ortiz, Hiedi Sorensen, Gerry Ealgbak and Dieter Bereiter

FRENCH Embassy media attaché Carelle Lucas, Johnny Litton and Anne Dalmayrac of Lifestyle Asia

AMBASSADOR Jesus Tambourong and his wife Margie Amantin, Vicky Zulaibi and Menchu and Ronnie Concepcion

FREDERICK Go, Robinsons Land president and CEO, with pretty wife Winnie Go and adorable couple Hilde and Miguel Belmonte

Bubbly vintage champagne affair

CECILE Mauricio, Moet Hennessy Asia Pacific's Randy Ulzen and champagne connoisseur Michel Madrigal Velasco

VEUVE CLICQUOT HAS CHOSEN 2002 as its first vintage for the 21st century. The vintage was chosen by Veuve Clicquot's chef de cave Jacques Peters and his team.

The absolutely rare champagne was introduced in the country at Red restaurant of Makati Shangri-La. The champagne was paired with luxuriously creations by chef Joel-Hugues Lurn.

Starting off the elegant dinner were the yummy canapés served with Veuve Clicquot's signature Yellow Label.

Apres the cocktails, we sat down to savor the delectable capsicum of tuna and duck foie gras with a sip of Veuve Clicquot Vintage 2002. The wine was silky and generous.

Next was the excellently prepared lemon olive oil poached Hokkaido lobster, asparagus. This was paired with Veuve Clicquot Vintage Reserve...lovely and from yet soft and velvety.

Then we were served the main course, the dryage, to-die-for pan-seared loin of veal glazed with Burgundy sauté, adorned with Chanterelles mushrooms, potato strudel and sauteed Brussels sprouts. It was paired with the Veuve Clicquot Vintage Rosé, a full-bodied champagne ideal for serving with impressive dishes characterized by rich and powerful flavors of the veal.

For dessert, we were served light vanilla and yoghurt mousse dessert and coffee.

We listened to emcee Johnny Litton explain the quality of each champagne served.

As always it was another awesome night that only Veuve Clicquot and Makati Shangri-La's Red could organize. It left an imprint on our world of luxury.

ED SEL GADIO, DHL chair, and wife Margarita D.

SACRED Heart chair Henry Zalsavre and wife Jojo Zalsavre

PAYENVI Carmona and Wilkerson, China Trust Bank chair

BMW'S FIRST couple, managing director Andreas Bottler and his wife Mia Kyung Bottler, and Robert Delgado

LA FANGEVP Chuck Jamilon, Moet Hennessy's Randy Ulzen and Lifestyle Asia's JR Nuss

Miladay

Women who were as dazzling as their magnificent bling things were asked to do the ribbon snipping, clubbings, during the relaunch of the House of Miladay on Jupiter Street, Makati.

Doing the honors were Philippine Supreme Court Associate Justice Cristina Perez-Estella, Supreme Court Justice Consuelo Santiago, Herman Poeste, Mia Quevedo and gorgeous Christel Bunsan.

SPARKLING Jaqui Dayrit Bunsan, guest of honor Cristina Perez-Estella, Supreme Court Justice Consuelo Santiago, Herman Poeste, Mia Quevedo and gorgeous Christel Bunsan

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH
Maurice Arcache
Photos by Alex Von Stiegers using WBL Photo Solutions

Also unveiled were Kenjualism of Gold by Yvonne Dayrit Santamaria, and the royal G bedroom line by Jacqueline Dayrit Benson.

Third generation Dayrit jewelers...sisters Nikki and Chabeli Boncan—led the blessings by sending participants Sascha Bikki, an Iraqi.

The fun part was the unveiling of the "Tawny Jewel in a Ivory" contest.

The grand prize—trip for two to Singapore and a stay at Fullerton Hotel—went to Elsie Montenegro for his "Wedding Proposal" entry.

Shoppers that night also received great giveaways, pabitagan.

Do call 896-6177, 8168214 and 8964504 or visit www.miladayjewels.com.

HOTSHOT businessman Boglio Barrera and Philly Jusio

CARMELITA Azimuda with the dazzling Dayrit gals Michelle D. Soliven, Yvonne D. Bermudez and Christine Dayrit

Rachy's Borak

For the grand opening of his exhibit at InterCon Manila lobby, talented Rachy Cuna made his grand entrance in a native barong untied by dancers of the Bayanihan National Folk Dance Company!

It was truly a festive scene complete with the famous bigamo of singson.

The guests were so amazed that they applauded endlessly as Rachy stepped out of the boat to take a well-deserved bow. Now, that's style, viva sa pay!

The dancers then gave our floral and coin salute to the audience before performing the tapote or bangko (bench dance) and stealing (bamboo dance), pabitagan.

Now InterContinental Manila GM Charles Marshall and his sub sub gang were kept busy welcoming the resident artisan of his alma pennsylvanian led by Tourism Secretary Ace Durano and Assistant Secretary Ethi Jurapa; businesswoman and author Erlinda Pandilla; Cultural Heritage Foundation president Mita Ruffini; Intramuros administration chief Randel Kuspet; TV host Sonny Cerio-Medina; and art businesswoman Cheibi Aduna.

"Harper Cuna," Rachy's exhibit of floral installations, sponsored by the InterCon to celebrate of Philippine Heritage Month, showed us what could be achieved creatively with the use of indigenous materials and objects in everyday living.

Rachy's fossilized leaves became beautiful roses; coconut palm tiles (nipping) touched up with beach became fabulous accent pieces; and even the native wooden rings (balya) were turned into funky and fun divine curtains!

CCP PRESIDENT Nes Jardin, InterContinental Manila PR director Jenny Peña and Lyra Santos at Makati Skyline

CELEBRITY Grace Cayetano Lara and Noel Quintos

ANNIE Lim Kaysong and her daughter Michelle with Martha Cecilia Ojo

CLANG Garcia and Boni Rosario, one of the event's emcees

SONYA Garcia and Tonny Parce

SECRETARY of Tourism Ace Durano, InterContinental Manila GM Charles Marshall, talented Rachy Cuna and Tourism Undersecretary Ethi Jurapa

GERALDINE Dolor and Olivia Dy Sun

ROMELDA Martinez, Rep. Boni Rosario and business magnate Sebastian Chua, one of the guests of honor

VIVACIOUS Carmela Bocaegro

FERVIN Agustin, Francis Herrasco, Opal Herrasco, Chito Gaduenos and Benjie Yap

REGGIE Samson and Sandra Chanlian

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INQUIRER LIFESTYLE SERIES: 'FITNESS.FASHION'

From the boardroom to the gym, and back

By Chucha V. Moral

FASHION IS JUST A REFLECTION of what's happening around us," said Rajo Laurel. "If the people need more outerwear and workout clothes to attain a healthy lifestyle, as designers we have to provide that."

That came about "Fitness.Fashion," the 2003 outside event in the Samsung-sponsored boomer lifestyle series, held last Thursday at Peninsula Manila. After fanning, major sponsors are HSBC, The Peninsula Manila. The brands behind the show are Kipling, Speedo, Puma, Vibe, Sketch, Nike Golf, Mizuno & Spotless, Adidas, Asics, Oxbow, Swatch and L'Oreal.

A collaboration between Manila's top designers and leading activewear brands, the show featured Rianna icons as guest models.

Lolit Tan-Gan said, "Thebest Lifestyle editor who conceived the project keeps us designers competitive and challenges us to trend-set.... Today's health-conscious lifestyle is balance at work and play. Having to change gear from work to exercise can take time. The ideal is to be half-dressed for the action. This generation is selective, will not go active without style."

Tan-Gan added: "It would be great if active sports brands can add new top-end lines that have athletic specialwear and style, with designers coming up with high-fashion athletic wear that focuses on sports performance."

That may not be a long shot. This early, the project has already produced results. At least one designer is now in discussions to develop a Rianna line, while a few others are adding sportier looks in their RTW lines.

GUEST model Tessa Prieto-Valdes

LULU TAN-GAN'S FUTURISTIC TENNISWEAR FOR FILA

Knits queen Lolit Tan-Gan stuck to her signature knits—nuts-n'things, spaced dyed tie-bars—in just-up Fila's tennis line of traditional tops, dresses, skirts, shorts and salutes. Her theme was "Spaces at the Court," featuring what she described as "futuristic, fun, sexy pieces." In a nod to tradition, Tan-Gan maintained Fila's traditional black, red and white, but used ribbon for accent. Intriguing with the futuristic theme, she used nylon thread for the knits with metal hardware drawn in.

GUEST model Ruby Gan

INAUGURAL ASERON'S COUTURE TOUCH FOR PUMA

Hussein Chalayan will reportedly create a collection for Puma, which made Inarguable Aseron especially thrilled as work with the brand. Aseron's first activewear line pairs tech Puma pieces with jackets and pants with couture touches—pleatings and dropings, patchwork patterns. "There were couture techniques, but they were very wearable. I put in linings and the fabrics were very easy (cotton piqué)." The good news: Similar pieces will be under 10,000 for Myth.

LOUIS CLAPAROLS' 'STAR WARS' FOR SPEEDO

Since last year, Louis Claparols' garments have taken a sportswear feel. Then, "Fitness.Fashion" was a natural fit. A devout yogi, he didn't, however, design around yogis. He worked around the brand's Spa Collection of basic black swimwear and loungewear, influenced by the uniforms of the Imperial size to inspire us "Star Wars." He designed capes, leggings, sheer tops and holes to contrast black, blue and white for "visual impact."

GUEST model Leica Cayo

GUEST models Nina Go and Sen. Pia Cayetano

JAMES REYES' MODERN GLADIATOR FOR SPEEDO

The Olympian as a "modern gladiator" was James Reyes' concept for Speedo. To his delight, one of his pieces landed on the front page of the Inquirer last week, no small thanks to his model, sports advocate Sen. Pia Cayetano. Reyes likes to refer to his clothes as "sun garments" and views add-on pieces to the Speedo Competition Line swimwear (he made shorts, hoodies, capelets and abbreviated jackets. They're like "armors," he said. For the session, he made a jacket in deference to her stature. But "I was surprised because she didn't want to wear it. She's proud of her body. She's very athletic." Cayetano took to the catwalk in a headline-ready, racerback swimsuit paired with Reyes' bone black shirt that grazed the floor.

GUEST model Jeane Lopez

RAJO LAUREL'S SPORTS-TO-SENSUAL LOOK FOR AIGLE AND GX3GW

His was a tough row: merging his aesthetics—romantic, luxurious and cozy—with that of two relatively unknown brands (at least locally). Aigle is a French outdoor-camping brand, while fellow creative surfing pair Laurel picked out Aigle's linen and earth-toned pieces and "tricked them for more sensual shapes." His own pieces were mixed with Optimo's swimsuits and shorts. "My vision was for a woman like my muse, Jeane Lopez, who rock-climbs one day, surfs and kite boards the next...then goes on a club the next day," Laurel said. He is now in talks with a brand to develop a fitness line.

From the boardroom to the gym, and back

GUEST model Svetlana Demeke

JUCY GARATIN'S DANCE ICONS FOR MARKS & SPENCER

Choosing camisoles, basic tees and stretch pants from the British clothing brand, the Cebu designer decided to give a contemporary dance's grand dames Isadora Duncan and Martha Graham in her collection. Marks & Spencer gave her free rein to embellish the pieces. "It was fun," she said. "I can relate [to the looks]. It means you can have a basic tee and an embellished skirt and two-wear it to a formal affair." The execs saw a positive project. "It got people an idea that you can take these two ideas off the rack and make to order."

GUEST models Paolo Abrera (above) and Phoenix Barredo

KHETT KALA'S RETRO FOR ADIDAS

Himself a creative director for a casual-sportswear brand, Khett Kala took the challenge as an expanded excuse for a recent mini exhibit of his artworks. Dividing it on Adidas accessories for the collection, he transferred his nationalist and Damien Hirst-inspired paintings via silkscreen on polo shirts and bottoms from the brand Collections, which he designs. For a reverse bet, he room for a solid-black-and-white collection.

RED-CARPET LOOKS. From left: Kia Cruz, Katrina Goulbourn-Fear, Sol Calasi, Irene Marcos, Daphne Pare and Ingrid Go

Backstage pass

INQUIRER YP for sales and marketing Rene Reinoso with Tweenie Gonzales, Anthony Mocsen and YMoi's Billie Lim

BLADE Lopez and vibrant Sole Ilao and Ishmy on the red carpet for Blade

RANDY Grez and Lois Tan-Gan

CLOCKWISE from top left: Luisa Carpo, Kidlat Thompson and Tweenie Gonzales

From the boardroom to the gym, and back

QUEST model Poly Ramos

PATRICE RAMOS-DIAZ'S FEMININE DETAILS FOR ADIDAS

"My collection was an attempt to show the relationship between two concepts that are more often than not perceived as opposites—femininity and physical strength," Patrice Ramos-Diaz said. Girly hooded ponchos, electric-pleat culls and lace skirts and jammed-up boots (originally combined with womenswear masculine Adidas pieces in techno fabrics.

"With the use of ornamentation and styling—crystal bracelets, ribbon ties, festive jersey wrist bands and thigh-high jersey leg warmers, and the use of masculine cuts and silhouettes—I tried to push femininity to explore its contradiction to masculinity while still proving that fitness and strength can be found in a girly girl." A fitness buff, Ramos-Diaz made sure her collection reflected that sports can be fun also for boys by bringing in bright colours.

"I think fashion motivates people to get into a sport," she said.

QUEST model Rashaeng Dixi

JOEY SAMSON'S FRESH TAKE FOR BENCH

To bring a fresh, more sophisticated feel to a mass retail brand like Bench was the challenge for Joey Samson. He chose to inject the aesthetics of Japanese sportswear into the collection and added prevailing trends such as rock-star jackets and wide-leg sequined pants for formal occasions looks. It turned down by the fitness slant. To contrast Bench's masculine palette, he went for a subdued black-and-white collection with some red accents. Samson used vintage fabrics from Cubao, which presented to be not enough when his initial idea led to new ones. His motto: how basic it stand is, one can put a twist to it, he said. "The idea is to make something you can wear from work to workout or vice versa... In one look, I had a tuxedo jacket dresses over a golf outfit. That's where the Irish lies. When you say tuxedo, it doesn't have to be strictly formal."

QUEST models Amarah Carpo and Mike Thompson

RANDY ORTIZ'S MILITARY LOOK FOR PUMA

Randy Ortiz had earlier conceptualized an urban color and military-inspired look for his Puma Season Collection for Mitch boutique. His collaboration with Puma was anchored on it, proving again that it's not a stretch to marry sportswear with special designer pieces. His palette was of khakis, fatigues and browns. "It's how a designer chooses to dress it up—as street-casual couture or more dressed-up and upbeat. There's a change in lifestyle. Everyone is less uniform...In a certain point, in jeans, " he said. The military look is more a fashion statement than a political," he clarified. And "it's rebellious in that aspect."

BARBA'S SUZANNE LENGLEN INSPIRATION FOR KIPLING

A strong believer in clothes that breathe and move with the wearer, Vis Barba looked to the French tennis great of the Nineteen-twenties, Suzanne Lenglen, for inspiration. Lenglen was famous for both her fiercely competitive court outfits and her lightweight and passionate dresses by Jean Patou. Barba similarly went for easy silhouettes—jumpsuit, maxi dress, shirtdress, roomy pants and capri pants for men. He used stretch materials like cotton, jersey, twill.

QUEST model Teresita de Leon Gonzalez

ANTHONY NOCOM'S PREPPY LINE FOR NIKE GOLF

A veteran menswear designer though a complete novice in golf, Anthony Nocom found it a pleasant surprise that Nike Golf's store, specifically the Tiger Woods collection, were all in bright colors. Nocom designed shorts in candy-striped fabrics, and sport jackets, including a denim, to go with his after-the-clubhouse look. His trading was very preppy; he layered his golf tees and sleeves in some pastel-colored shirts. He picked a pair of linen pants that had "no longer appeal" from Nike's own collection, in the hope of rearing it from the selling floor.

LIVING Stars

Website: www.inquirer.net/livingstars

Edric Emerio G. Velarde
with contributions from Marichu A. Villanueva, Marinel R. Cruz and Jeannette I. Andrade
Click on Comments to message to Edric (Stars) and Marichu (Stars), or email us at starsmail@inquirer.com.ph

IYA VILLANIA

THE TERRACE IS MY FAVORITE spot in the house. I may have para mag-exercise, I try to write songs here, too, while looking out and having a glass of juice. I also talk on the phone a lot here. Sometimes, I fall asleep on the couch. It's really pleasant and I love at night.

Marinel R. Cruz

FAVORITE NOOKS

CHEER FACTOR

Mars celebrity twins coming up

LOS ANGELES—ZURI DAUGHTER, 8, PRESIDENT with twins, her spokeswoman said Tuesday. Lisa Marie Presley, 40, married her fourth husband Michael Lockwood, a musician and her producer, in January 2006. Her two kids, aged 10 and 15, are from her first marriage to Danny Keough. Presley was also married to Michael Jackson and actor Nicolas Cage. AFP

TAIL TALES

JOAQUI VALDES

YOGI, 4, IS A BARO-BREED Dachshund. He's spoiled and fussy. When he was younger, ang pangit niyan. Now he has the most beautiful coat. Ayaw niya ng ulan. Hindi, our youngest at 1, is a Labrador. Alabang pupi siyon. Kinga, the oldest, is a Golden Retriever. He's trained. He doesn't eat until you give him the go signal.

Marinel R. Cruz

DID YOU KNOW...

How these girls got the deals

NEW DJ MARIAN Rivera and Miguel Concepcion land their latest endorsement deals?

Ariella Arida, "our explainer," Dawn Zulueta as image model for the sizzling Jose Mig bronzer, a statement from the brand owner Maricel Tanseco says. Valerie "courageously poked

VALERIE Concepcion

up the pieces after a fall."

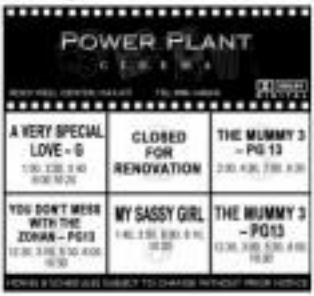
Tanseco adds: "Val is a strong, independent woman who was not afraid to own up to her indiscretion and then moved on to pursue her dreams."

Marian Rivera's matching up with the dermatological center Facial Care to launch an Acne philosophical consideration.

She explains why she is endorsing FC's LaserLight treatment (for unwanted hair): "Ang dami kong hair sa legs! I acted wanting, shaving... Often, I just wouldn't have the time or, I'd have to wait for co-guests before another round of hair removal. I was always worried that my sexy costumes would show body hair... somewhere, in fact, I'm free from all that."

MARIAN Rivera

Pizza Hut helps children rediscover the fun of reading



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elisha cuthbert jesse bradford
my sassy girl
The girl your mother warned you about.

Vicki toasts Dingdong

DINGDONG DANTES MARKED HIS 28TH birthday on Sunday at the NBC Tent in Bagong Ilog with a "Casino Royale"-inspired party. The event, hosted by the Dela Merced Group, came complete with gaming tables, sexy ladies and a Monte Isa.

Meriluf E. Cruz

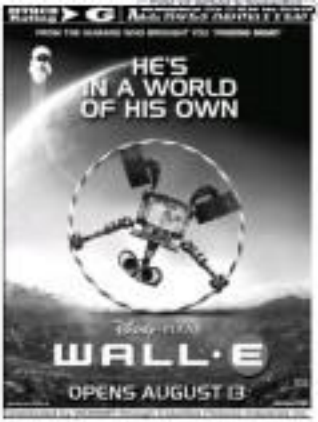
DINGDONG'S sweetheart Kaylie

DIRECTOR Mac Alejandre and actress Iza Calzado

ACTORS Dina Guerrero and Benjie Paras

SINGERS Jaya and Kyla Alcasid

SINGER-actor Jonas Gaba



At the Cinemas

GLORIETTA 1	1	2	3 THE DARK KNIGHT	4 A VERY SPECIAL LOVE
GLORIETTA 4	1 A VERY SPECIAL LOVE	2 THE MUMMY: TOMB OF THE DRAGON EMPEROR	2D THE MUMMY: TOMB OF THE DRAGON EMPEROR	
	4 MAMMA MIA	5 THE DARK KNIGHT	6 YOU DON'T MESS WITH THE ZOHAN	7 MY BABY GIRL
GREENBELT 1	1 A VERY SPECIAL LOVE	2 THE MUMMY: TOMB OF THE DRAGON EMPEROR		
GREENBELT 2	1D YOU DON'T MESS WITH THE ZOHAN	2D THE MUMMY: TOMB OF THE DRAGON EMPEROR		
	3 MAMMA MIA	4 THE MUMMY: TOMB OF THE DRAGON EMPEROR	5 MY BABY GIRL	
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1D YOU DON'T MESS WITH THE ZOHAN	2 THE MUMMY: TOMB OF THE DRAGON EMPEROR		
	3 A VERY SPECIAL LOVE	4 MY BABY GIRL	5 THE MUMMY: TOMB OF THE DRAGON EMPEROR	
AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 THE MUMMY: TOMB OF THE DRAGON EMPEROR	2 YOU DON'T MESS WITH THE ZOHAN	3 A VERY SPECIAL LOVE	4 MY BABY GIRL
MARKET! MARKET!	1 YOU DON'T MESS WITH THE ZOHAN	2 THE MUMMY: TOMB OF THE DRAGON EMPEROR		
	3 MY BABY GIRL	4 A VERY SPECIAL LOVE	5 THE DARK KNIGHT	
TRINOMA	1 A VERY SPECIAL LOVE	2 MY BABY GIRL	3 MAMMA MIA	4 THE DARK KNIGHT
	5 YOU DON'T MESS WITH THE ZOHAN	6 THE MUMMY: TOMB OF THE DRAGON EMPEROR	7D THE MUMMY: TOMB OF THE DRAGON EMPEROR	

At the Malls

Ayala Malls

Glorietta — LAGUNA EXPO
Showcase of Products made in Laguna
August 6-10, Activity Center

Greenbelt — DINNER JAZZ NIGHTS WITH MORNING STAR
August 8, 8PM-MPM, Greenbelt 5 Park

Alabang Town Center — Anton's Impressive Exhibit
August 8 - 31, Activity Center

Ayala Center Cebu — Crossroads Mall Event with John Lloyd
August 9, 3PM, Activity Center

Market! Market! — A Gift All to Cuddle
Shop at Market! Market! on August 8, 2008 and get lucky at various Activity Centers (exclusive)
August 8, Activity Center

Cinetag — Repertoire Philippines presents Rosario's MILLAS in Joaquin Cinemart '8, 2008
For details, call 8870770 or log on to www.repertoirephilippines.com

Ayala Museum — John Lloyd Selected Paintings from the BPI Collection on view until Aug 24
For details, call 757-0000 to 757-0010 or visit us at www.ayalamuseum.org

Tri Noma — Celebrity Home Exhibit: At Home with Lucy Torres-Gomez
July 17 - Aug. 30, Level 1 Exhibit Area (near SM Store)

Cinebook Cut Exhibit
Aug. 1-10, Level 1 MRT Link

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Glorietta · Greenbelt · Alabang Town Center · Ayala Center Cebu · Tri Noma

Ehra of *shopping*

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Photos by Rody Espiritu

Looks can be deceiving. Or don't judge a book by its busy cover.

Although Ehra Madrigal is sometimes pummelled unnecessarily on the GMA 7 shows "Kuya" and "Wow Innovations"), she insists that she's the exact opposite in real life.

"When people meet me for the first time, they can't believe that I'm not pa girl," she says.

She describes her fashion style as "tomboy ... chill ... rockin'."

"When I'm not going to show biz events, I'll rather wear flip-flops and not high heels. I prefer oversized shirts and leggings to dresses."

But her latest Regal movie "Loving You," however, she had to pump up the glamour.

"I play Rey Danaire, a call center agent who dreams of becoming a model," she notes. "My movie roles require that I go shopping all the time. I have to buy lots of clothes and accessories then."

FLIP-FLOPS

She confesses that she didn't intend to collect fascinations.

"I just started with a few and, before I knew it, I had 15 pairs in my closet. "When it became popular, I kept buying new arrivals at the SM Flip-Flops store. Until I realized that I couldn't wear them all

SHE NEVER leaves her home without her trusty Canon Ixus digital camera.

WORKOUT tops in all shades of the rainbow

CROCODILE bag is a friend's gift.

OUT OF THE CLOSET

SHOES

She prefers flip-flops because, as she tries to sell, she often has a hard time finding comfortable footwear.

"When I'm not working," she stresses, "I prefer Clark Taylor and sneakers."

But since whenever she's on a job requirement, she has grudgingly started a collection of Aldo shoes. "The brand fits me perfectly and I love their designs."

TANK TOPS

Every time she's in a Top Shop outlet, she ends up buying tank tops in all shades of the rainbow.

"When I work out, I usually wear tank tops," she notes.

Tank tops make her look long and lean, she says. "My favorites are the purple and orange tops."

Apart from Top Shop shirts, she also has a few from Rubivo and TRIO Glam.

EHRA Madrigal lugs along the accessories organizer to work.

SCENTS

Like most celebs, she has amassed quite a selection of scents.

Do her dressers are stuck designer fragrances as Elizabeth Arden, Issey Miyake, Clinique Happy, Bench, DKNY Be Delicious, Echo and Bvlgari. But her all-time fave is Dolce & Gabbana Light Blue.

"I like D&G and Echo because they're not too overpowering. Light lang: I hate floral. I prefer fruity, citrus and vanilla scents."

She does luxury items, she frequents Greenhills bazaars. "I go to a store there that sells imported perfume at lesser prices compared to malls."

ACCESSORIES

It's whatever, she exclaims.

"On the set, boys only need to bring a belt as accessory, while girls have to lug along lots of bracelets, earrings, pendants."

The list goes on and on.

"And there should be different kinds: casual, formal, sporty."

At each, she bought an accessories organizer from Bauhaus that can accommodate 40 pieces.

"This organizer has two sides, with 40 pockets on each side," she explains. "Whenever I have a shoot or taping, I can bring all my accessories in one organizer."

She says she's partial to the gold pieces.

'KIKAY' KIT

"I bring lots of makeup in the set," she says.

But for everyday wear, "I'm usually fine with just lip balm and concealer. I wear very little makeup. Just concealer to cover dark spots and eye bags."

FAVE of her collection of Havaianas

BLACK Aldos for formal events.

TOY WATCH is one of Ehra's favorite things.

PACKED "kikay" kit for a no-fuss working girl

NEO Aldo strappy

TRIO Glam top

SHADES keep her incognito.

BAGS, SHADES, WATCHES

Her biggest acquisitions so far are two Louis Vuitton bags. She emphasizes, however, that "unlike other girls," she doesn't have the urge to buy a new bag every week.

She prefers big, practical bags in which she can put lots of stuff.

The big black crocodile bag is a Christmas gift from friend Charlene, while she bought the animal print overnight bag online. "I only buy stuff from multiple-user sellers I know and trust," she says.

For eyewear, she loves Marc Jacobs and Dana Buchman.

A new passion is oversized Tag Watches. "It's one of Oprah Winfrey's favorite things. I prefer big watches because these make my hands look smaller by comparison," she says, laughing.

E-mail: bayan.sandiego@inquirer.com

GLASS SLIPPER Former First Lady Imelda Marcos is given a glass slipper by her friend, Italian designer Raberi Balestra, at the opening night of "Cinderella" at the CCP Main Theater last week. Balestra is the production's costume designer. Above photo are, from L, Lipa's Salonga, "Cinderella" lead Lea Salonga, Irma Marcos-Araneta, actors Matthew Dare and Lorena Martinez.

WHITE Aldo tunic skirt

CHOKERS are job requirements.

A YELLOW manner

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ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Bonnie D. Velarde

'Hi Skul Musikahan' in Star City

BALLET MANILA TAKES STAR CITY AUDIENCES THROUGH ... "Hi Skul Musikahan." The production fuses pop music with standard dance, combining the scene of "Skul Rock" with the musicality of the Disney Channel series. Bibi artistic director, Lyza Maniga Ejercito says Hi-Skul Musikahan is her interpretation of the Disney Channel hit. Features cast from shows at 6 p.m.; matinee at 7:30 p.m.

CHEER FACTOR

INSIDE

FIRST TIME EVER
Private persons Dolphy and Vic Sotto discuss personal matters.

SIMPLE Plan's Pierre Bouvier

- **Reggie Lee, Pinoy actor in Ben Stiller movie** OnlyInHollywood /15
- **13-year-old reviews Simple Plan show** /14
- **Meet 4 dynamic teens, your 'Ka-blog'** /15
- **TV5 to remain Filipino** Inquirer Exclusive /2

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1 THE MUMMY: TOMB of the DRAGON EMPEROR
2 THE MUMMY: TOMB of the DRAGON EMPEROR
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6 MY SASSY GIRL
7 PROJECT X
8 indieSine: BROKAL
9 MAMMA MIA!
10 PONTIANAK

ERMITA

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PIONEER

1 THE MUMMY 3
2 MY SASSY GIRL
3 A VERY SPECIAL LOVE
4 YOU DON'T MESS with the ZOHAN

STA. ROSA

1 THE MUMMY 3
2 THE DARK KNIGHT
3 YOU DON'T MESS with the ZOHAN
4 A VERY SPECIAL LOVE

LIPA

1 THE MUMMY 3
2 A VERY SPECIAL LOVE
3 BANK JOB
4 YOU DON'T MESS with the ZOHAN
5 JOURNEY to the CENTER of the EARTH

DASMARIÑAS

1 BANK JOB
2 YOU DON'T MESS with the ZOHAN
3 A VERY SPECIAL LOVE
4 THE MUMMY: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor

IMUS

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2 YOU DON'T MESS with the ZOHAN
3 THE MUMMY 3
4 PONTIANAK

ANGELES

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4 MEET DAVE

STARMILLS

1 MEET DAVE
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BACOLOD

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6 THE HOTTIE and the NOTTIE

ILOILO

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4 YOU DON'T MESS with the ZOHAN
5 THE FLOOD
6 THE DARK KNIGHT

TV5 'still a Filipino station'

By Marinel R. Cruz

DESPITE THE INFUSION OF CAPITAL BY a Malaysian consortium, MBC's — now called TV5 — remains a Filipino TV station, according to new network boss Christopher Ty.

MBC's chief operating officer Antonio "Tony Boy" Cojuangco recently entered into a long-term block airtime agreement with MBB Primedia Inc., a local subsidiary of the Malaysian conglomerate MediaPrima Berhad.

The block airtime agreement means that Primedia bought "all available airtime" from ABC 5, a network insider explained.

Under Primedia, TV5 aims to air "innovative, relevant and aspirin" programs, according to the Primedia's CEO.

"This is a local TV station and should be locally run," Ty declared. "The Malaysians have left all the decision-making to the execs, which is entirely local. TV5 has nothing Malaysian about it."

Ty added that with the channel's new programming came the need for the network to change its brand name. The network had been known as Associated Broadcasting Company (ABC) before 1992.

"The re-branding was necessary to cause effectively communicate these changes to the public," Ty said. "We're going to be very different from the old ABC 5. The new name, new look and new logo were very deliberate."

The young network boss gave lessons in entertainment as innovation last week, answering questions on TV5's block-timing contract and target market, and in sparking new 12-hour transmitters.

What is the duration of the block-timing contract with ABC 5?

We don't want to get into the details, but it's definitely more than 10 years.

You are launching at a time when the economy is not so good.

Times are tough these days, but it will not stop me this time around. I think I effectively build our brand and gain our audience, the money just will take care of it as well.

Do your Malaysian shareholders' commitments?

There are a lot of conversations going on. We're pretty optimistic. The presentation [launch] fulfilled our personality. Our logo is younger, less serious than the others. Second the number 5 is a shaking television. Our tagline is "Shake Me." Watch. This means we will shake your perceptions of TV. We want people to see that TV programming is not just what ABS-CBN and GMA 7 want us to watch.

How are your programs different from the current TV lines?

I think the two networks are going after the same market. If you're someone who's active, someone who is out of the house most of the time, you would want variety. You don't like to be watching "Dyesebel" every single night. We offer programs that are fresher and more related for our target market, which is a little younger than ABS' or GMA's. Our shows are snappy, faster-paced.

The old ABC 5 catered to an older audience — between 25 and 40. Eventually, because of the sports programming, it skewed a little to the male gender. Our target is gender-neutral.

The network recently bought a 12Mw transmitter.

ABC 5 realized that one of the things that kept the network back traditionally was the poor signal. To move ahead, Mr. Cojuangco said he really needed to invest in a world-class transmitter and good infrastructure. It's a brand-new transmitter from Italy. It's at par with other transmitters out.

Studio 23 appears to be targeting the same market as yours. What's your edge?

Studio 23 has a lot of canned English programs. Our edge is a large slate of local programming. Even our canned shows will be dubbed in Filipino.

Are you not having difficulty getting stars for your shows, since they are mostly under contract with the competition?

We're lucky that some established names have agreed to do shows for us — Jhoy Aguinaldo, Jun Villasis and Arnold Vegas, among others. These people are committed on a per-show basis. Lucy Torres will soon appear on "Shall We Dance," which will now feature not just ballroom dancing but also hip-hop and street-dancing for the younger viewers.

E-mail marinel.cruz@inquirer.com.ph

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

'We want people to see that television is not just what ABS-CBN and GMA 7 want us to watch. We will shake old TV perceptions'

TV5 BOSS Christopher Ty is after a decidedly younger market.

Three hours of solid fun

HEADLINING the concert was the pop-rock band Simple Plan, which sang most of its hits while the fans jumped and screamed along. The Big Dome was transformed by its spidy cell phone cameras.

By Ana Katrina Mendoza Deocadiz
Contributor

THREE ROCK ACTS HROOR THE AGGRIS in Calasiao despite a sparse crowd on Monday night.

Headlining the concert was the pop-rock band Simple Plan, which sang most of its hits while fans jumped and screamed along.

Kicking off the set with the song "Generation," off its latest album, Simple Plan also sang "Save You"—which was heard live by a local audience for the first time.

The band had the crowd bouncing to the tune "Jump," and lighting up the Big Dome with cell phones and cameras in "Perfect," which ended the three-hour-long show.

JAMIE Scott

For a 13-year-old fan who has followed Simple Plan's career for the past three years, this gig was a bit of a disappointment. The band didn't sing its more popular hits like "Crazy" and "Untitled."

Lead singer Pierre Bouvier also looked tired...he was not his usual hyper self.

One saving grace was the way the members thanked the audience with their repeated use of Tagalog phrases like "Maraming Salamat" and "Mabuhay, Pilipinas." They even changed the lyrics of the song "Thank You" to "Salamat" and let the crowd sing along with them.

Probably the night's biggest surprise was the aging punk group Teen Pound.

The bands promised to return to Manila soon

Glory. It had the crowd going wild and head-banging to the music — even when it consisted of popular song covers, such as "Ysa" by the Gloc Gan Dalla and "Kiss Me" by Sixpence None The Richer.

Somebody from the audience, who proved to be exceptionally good with the bass guitar, got especially lucky when he was asked to go on stage and jam with the band. He was rewarded with drumsticks and mini-bags from the band members.

Providing contrast to the energetic performance was Jamie Scott and The Town, who opened the show. Scott, who confided during a meet-and-greet session that he had arrived in Manila just three hours earlier, still managed to impress the crowd.

To his credit, he succeeded in ignoring a drowning sound coming from the amplifiers, to deliver an inspired show. Although he was the least known among the three acts, it was obvious that he had dedicated fans in the audience, who sang along and swayed to his music.

All in all, it was a fun night for both the performers and the spectators. Appropriately encouraged by the crowd's enthusiasm, the bands promised to return soon.

(The author is 13 years old, studies at South Island School in Hong Kong, and plans Justin Park, Alphine, and Lost Prophets right on the list of her other favorite bands.)

From Baclaran set to Toronto screen

Anita Linda-starrer 'Adela' has been invited to September Canadian fest

By Rowan Jan Diego Jr.
Reporter

ADOLFO ALIX JR.'S "ADELA," starring screen legend Anita Linda, has been invited to the prestigious Toronto International Film Festival, which runs in the Canadian city Sept. 4 to 13.

The news was relayed to Inquirer Entertainment by Alix, who added that his film will be included in the section called Contemporary World Cinema.

Also 'Serbis'

Another Filipino film, Dante Mendoza's "Serbis," will be screened in the Vanoc section.

In an exclusive interview with the Inquirer, Anita Linda said she was both "excited and confused" about her latest film's international recognition.

"I can't believe it. I don't understand why it's happening to me," she said. "I'm already 83 years old and I'm going to my first international film festival. This is a great gift from God."

She related that, while shooting in a Las Piñas dump site and the streets of Baclaran, she never imagined that the film would take her places.

Fund-raising

"Imagine that, ang layo na nang narating ... dati-rati nahuhuli lang ako sa dumpsite, hanggang ng silahok ito. This film has gone far ... before, I was just sitting in a dump site, breathing in all the dust[,]" she recounted.

She plans to attend the festival in Canada, and the film's producers are now in the midst of a fund-raising campaign for her trip.

Also in September, "Adela" will be screened in the Windows to Asian Cinema section of the Pusan International Film Festival in South Korea, along with "Serbis," Auraeus Solito's "Baby Ampolo" Francis Pasion's "Joy" and Aureaus Salino's "Boy."

Chris Martinez's "100" is included in Pusan's New Currents section.

Meanwhile, ongoing is a retrospective of Anita's films, mounted by the UP Film Institute in Diliman.

Scheduled are screenings of Gerry de Leon's "Sisa," for which she won Manila Critics Best Actress in 1952, and Alix's "Sambahan," for which she is nominated for Best Supporting Actress in this year's Urian.

Brocka award

Anita, whose acting career spans seven decades, is also the recipient of this year's Lino Brocka Lifetime Achievement honor from the Inquirer Foundation for Excellence.

Next month, screenings of Anita's other films are set to UP. Gerry de Leon's "Tatsa ni Lumang Sindhoro," Lino Brocka's "Tatlo, Dalawa, Isa," "Jaguar" and "Philippe Lipad, Pilipit-Pilipit," Ishmael Bernal's "Dahas ng Pagsuk, Isang Bwan," Mario O' Hara's "Babi Bugbog ang Langit" and "Balisa sa Dahong-ging Lata," Wilhelmina Percival's "Yakow Tabon" and Mike de Leon's "Kisses Dulce L."

E-mail: inquirerentertainment@hotmail.com

ANITA Linda is excited to attend her first int'l film festival.

The laugh and times of 2 funny men

Pumapag-on musicals...

VIC: Ang tatlong ni Raymond Bayani's Merry-Go-Round. Ayos ang managers Magdalulo siya ang performances abroad.

How did you learn about that?

VIC: Ako ang unang ko at "Okay Ka Fairy Ko." We were together for five years-di-until he passed away.

How was your 30s? Was it also your peak?

VIC: It's on-ako noon.

Dr. Mahusuma ni ya pa ang Apo Hiking Society til-be?

VIC: Sa "Okay Lang."

Dr. That was way before (nasita) ito Siguradong kaya di'o.

VIC: "Okay Lang" was one-how TV show, a gag show produced by ["Eat Bulaga" producer and "Dabal Seven" co-producer] Tony Tuviera. In Channel 13 'yan. Mga 14 kami si cast.

So how was your 30s?

VIC: I was very busy with work dara. May "Eat Bulaga," "Idol Bakol," may camera pa ako-noh. May Dunkin si Oye. Boy na ako no'o.

How about your 40s?

Dr. Mapag-usapit ito ng ito buggin si 40. Mas pumalo ang "Tulso ni Mardo." Siyo-yong movies kami noon. Maalala ko nagbigay ay ako ng audio noon ang Mehoni at Mamalihan. Di pa kami si Pilar [Pilapil] no'o.

VIC: In other words, noong 40s siya, mahihot pa rin siya. (Laughs)

Dr. Hindi ko kasi noon, pag-bobo ang problema, bobo-ang sabayan.

How about you, Vic, how was your 40s?

VIC: I was already positioning for TV.

More than half my life, I was on "Bubble Gang" for about 2004 years or so.

Dr. Ang tagal ng pala. At, sa noong 25th anniversary n'ya, nag-guest ako sa kya.

Mang Dolphy was also producing them. You have a lot of things in common.

VIC: Iyon Anak ako doating Shot siya. Hight-lang.

How was your 30s?

Dr. Kami na si Nora noon.

Sabi mo na ni, magsalo ang bobo mo.

Dr. Oo. Hanang pinakiki-ako si Zaldy, mas magalit pa.

VIC: Kaawaan na ng mag-asawa.

Dr. Medyo-di na talaga ako. Naiintindihan lang ebong bumibit si Chaos (Senior Comics of ABS-CBN).

What made you come back?

Dr. Well, siguro nasa puntos ng ng kalawan ko ang show ko. Kaya ako nag-Sonza, para sparahin si Sidney noon. Tapos nag [surgery] sakabale ko, 'diretsiken't Dry. Ahh ko sa dakita. 'Dos', kung-ayaring gusting Anne ng Be is ang dena ng Pasa."

How was your personal life in your 40s?

VIC: Ayos lang ang Jollimove ito noon, hindi naman bisobanap. Hindi pinaplano.

Dr. Mooo ngo, mas magagandang kinks-ang kwento ko para sa aking pero-nawawala.

What was your secret?

Dr. Di ko alam e. Mahirap ito ng sumagot niyo. Di ko saya alam. Siguro lang ako-nang tingin (sa Sabal).

Do you make them laugh?

VIC: Pinapatawa ako. Nagpapatawa ng, para pahapunan lang. Siguro pag nakasanayan, nakakatawa ako.

What are you most thankful for?

Dr. Siempre si Sidney. At Sonia. Ang dendoy ito. Sa nagpag nakita ng Sidney ko. May mga nasabihan ako na Sidney pero sobra pa sa ang hiyapat ni ngunit, pag-

VIC: Parehi rin. I'm thankful for what I am. For the good times and bad. For my friends, for my career. There are so many things to be thankful for. All these I give back to the Lord. Siyo ang Dakilang Panlay ng Sidney. Salig ngunit ito ni Lampa Ilan. Ang Sidney-on'yo, nasa iyo na ang magagawa mo nang mayan.

Can you say that you didn't waste any opportunity?

VIC: Oo!

In a relationship, how do you handle saying goodbye?

Dr. Mahirap-mahirap. Napakahirap sa labas.

VIC: It's hard if there are kids involved. Sila ang nagpo-suffer. But it's normal to go on for the sake of the children, it's not fair to anyone.

Did you feel guilty; did you have to make up to your kids?

Dr. Aiyong kalungang mag-dadale mon. Siyang noong kaso ebong makipag-friendship, aalis ng ahapon, pagkatapos naman ang pero na umal noonin. Tig-isa. Hahaha, buong 15 na taon ako-ngayon.

Mang Dolphy, kung buay nabibisan na you loved 'em all, from A to Z?

Dr. Pareho rin. Ang fist love ko, yon-galan siya, Aiza.

Binanabalan ko siya sa Ormoc. Maiba-ning ikawi se dressing room dahil Pilo pa lang ang nandito ko. Naglalaro ka ni dahil ayaw-pero gusto siya ng ibang bubay.

How many children do you have?

VIC: 4 ako.

Dr. 10 ako.

You have 10 children?

Dr. Di ako na ko. Iba 'yong mga nakipal. Di'ko na show 'yong mga ni-ili. Minsan ang pamasa sa ako. Anak ko nga bisa 'Kako ang tawag mo? Mga Pampanga daw. Singkit e, kapa-anak ko nga. Dr. Bernal naman ako. Magagaanan ng ng Lampa Ilan. Ang hirap-yo'n, nasa iyo na ang magagawa mo nang mayan.

Can you say that you didn't waste any opportunity?

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Your past loves and your children: were interested for the book. Good reviews ko ba?

Dr. Hindi nilo labas ng kinang nilo. Okay lang. Iyon naman. Para alis ng lang ang mga dapatman. (Laughs) Ganoon talaga. At bukay, sa mga anak ... mga pamili, may tulo. But I have no regrets.

What would you do for a friend?

Dr. Bilala kipa ko.

VIC: Anong ang dapat - I would do anything for a friend.

And for a woman, Vic?

Dr. Lalo na. Sa friend nga, anything, sa girlfriend pa. (Laughs)

What's your advice for Vic?

Dr. Sabi ko, pakasalan na siya si Ola (Gamido).

VIC: Ito-dito-ang-wish ko sa kanya.

Dr. Ako na, pag may-ambahan ng passport ko, tatalunan ang singkit, ha'o ito ang-mahi-Nakakahiya.

FIL-AM actor Reggie Lee, left, who plays the first lieutenant of a guerrilla army in the Golden Triangle in the action-comedy "Tropic Thunder," is praised by then father (star and director, right photo) as a "great" actor. Reggie says in turn, "What surprised me most about Ben as a director was how much he trusted us with the material. We had great respect for his actors."

Ben Stiller praises Fil-Am actor

Reggie Lee also works with 'Spider-Man' director, has lead role in indie film

LOS ANGELES—"I THINK HE'S A GREAT actor," Ben Stiller said of Reggie Lee, the Filipino-American thespian he directs in the action comedy "Tropic Thunder."

Ben, who also stars in "Tropic Thunder," was effusive in his praise for Reggie when we asked about the Quezon City-born actor in a recent interview at the Four Seasons Hotel. Reggie, whose credits include "Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End" (he played Ta Hung), "The Flat" and the Fortinet" (Lance Nguyen) and TV's "Prison Break" (secret service Agent Bill Kim), plays Byung, Ben Stiller's friend of a long-standing joke, a guerrilla army in the Golden Triangle that entertainers portrayed Hollywood stars doing a war movie in the jungle.

Three self-absorbed Tinseltown denizens who find themselves in a real war are played by Fox, Robert Downey Jr., Jack Black, Jay Baruchel and Brandon T. Jackson. When Reggie's character and his very young army lord him, Tom (played by the irreverent Brandon Tom Hiter) capture Ben's Tiggy Speedman, they learn that he is the star of their favorite movie, "Simple Jack," where Tiggy, in his desperate bid for an Oscar, plays a mentally challenged farmhand. The gunrel, Ian Jones Tiggy to re-enact "Simple Jack" as slightly entertainment.

"Tropic Thunder" also features a movie-stealing cameo by Tom Cruise, Matthew McConaughey and Nick Nolte. More about them soon tomorrow.

Here is the rest of Ben's comments on Reggie. "I saw Reggie's work on 'Prison Break.' He's a real chameleon. He can play many different roles. He has played different types. He's really smart, too. When he came in to read for the part, he took it very seriously. His character [in] the guy who we plays is very straight the whole movie.

"And what I appreciated about working with him is that he really had a give-and-take attitude about how he felt these [character] guys should be portrayed. 'Because I want to be real,' he said, 'I'm a certain point when he's something the 'Simple Jack' performance, he got moved by it. He really got that character. Although he is an accomplice in the movie, he gave as much life as possible to his character."

Reggie, who is fluent in Tagalog, just wrapped up filming "Drag Me to Hell," a much-anticipated project of Sam Raimi, the acclaimed director behind the "Spider-Man" movies.

In the indie film "Chinaman's Chance," the 2007 Distinguished Achievement Award winner tackles the lead role, a railroad worker in 1870s America strongly accused of massacring a white woman. Desirable Garcia-Lorido (Ms. Andy Garcia's daughter) and other talented featured down. Reggie is again in interesting company: Theresa Russell, Timothy Robert Downey Jr.'s performances as an Oscar-winning Australian thespian who undergoes a skin pigment dye job to play a black actor?

I seriously have to say that it's not of this world! As an actor ... I am always interesting to embody a character so completely that you'd do anything to "feel" that other person's life! We actors are crazy like that, what can I say?

Playing the assistant to Broadway's Tom, were you impressed that someone who was only 12 at the time of the filming can be that good on the very young leader of a guerrilla army?

I think Brandon was probably smarter than most of us on the set. He's one of the most precocious, down-to-earth, sweet little kids you will ever meet. I did my homework beforehand to feel my character's simultaneous loyalty to and fear of his character. Brandon made it so much easier. He's definitely a kid to not when the cameras start rolling.

What will you cherish most about your "Tropic Thunder" experience?

What I'll take away most of all is the integrity that all those A-list actors have for their work, from Ben Stiller, Robert Downey, Jack Black, Matthew McConaughey, Nick Nolte to Tom Cruise. They all respected their own work by being prepared and really letting it all fly when the cameras rolled. It's inspiring and it has brought out a newfound respect for my own work—and a great belief that we, Asians, can play with the best of them!

Tell us about one of your more Hiran—Ian Rained's "Drag Me to Hell," which is eagerly being awaited by horror movie fans.

"Drag Me to Hell" is the return of Sam Raimi to the director of the "Spiderman" franchise to the thriller/horror genre. He is a master and much loved favorite filmmaker of many genre fans. I met with him "Evil Dead" and "The Gift." I play a character named Ike Rubin who is pretty awful but, hopefully, funny at the same time. The evolution of this character within the script is just written so well by Sam and his brother Ivan. It was an absolute dream working with Sam. He always always works within your parameters of the character and scene and helps you take it to the next level.

I think what earns me concerns is pure magic! I don't even have enough adjectives to describe how amazing Sam is and I'd be ecstatic if I could work with him again. Also, there was never any talk of changing the name of my character from Ike Rubin to something more "Asian." I loved that!

And "Chinaman's Chance," an indie film where you have the lead role and you play opposite Ernest Borgnine, Timothy Bottoms and Barry Bostwick?

I recently saw a rough cut of this film that I did back in 2006. I can't tell you how excited people came up to me and were so thankful and moved by the humanization of the experience of the Chinese railroad workers in America. As independent films go, "Chinaman's Chance" is a long way from being totally finished. The experience of working on this film, of living the food and grinding it out every daily basis was really lacking and fulfilling at the same time.

What's next?

Well I went from shooting "Prison Break" and "Pirates of the Caribbean" in the same time, to "Tropic Thunder" and then to "Drag Me to Hell." I feel so blessed but I'm also ready for a little break—just a little one and this year I'll be acting to go again. I'm also producing a screenplay that my friend Heidi Ung wrote, entitled "Labyrinth." It's my first foray into producing so it's exciting! Of course, she's written an awesome role in the film for me. I can't wait get into the story from the acting.

E-mail the columnist at reggielee.1108@yahoo.com and read his blog, "The Reggie Report," at http://blogs.inquirer.net/reggielee/report.

"He's a real chameleon. He can play many different roles," says Ben Stiller of Reggie.

First magazine show for teens on GMA

By Maximo N. Cruz

ANDREA, 18, LUCKY, 18, MONICA, 20 and MONICA, 21, are the newest and youngest Filipino reporters.

They were hired to "help viewers better understand" adolescents," according to Gina delos Reyes, program manager of "Tok-Hing," the first magazine show for teens to air on GMA 7.

"It's an experimental show," Reyes explained. "We're targeting viewers aged 13 to 20. We hope parents watch, too, to help bridge the age gap between them and their kids."

Monica Arnaiz, of UP Diliman Broadcast Communications major, is the group's "radical one." She said, "Teenage viewers can discuss with our issues they don't have the courage to share with their parents. Our first episode addresses cyber bullying."

Mich Arenas, a Business Management student at the Asian Institute for Distance Education, will show the latest high-tech gadgets.

Andrea Torres, who's taking up Communication Arts at the University of Sto. Tomas, is the point person for fashion. "I like talk about lifestyle and show biz, too. In the first episode, I interviewed Richard Gutierrez and Bea Constantino about fashion. I also interviewed myself in the punk and emo lifestyles."

Lucky Mark Manicio is homeschooled. He will take viewers to sports events. "I tried Parkour, an extreme stunt sport; it's tough. I hope to try water sports in the future," he said.

"Tok-Hing" premieres on GMA 7 on Saturday at 10 a.m.

Do all of you maintain Facebook accounts?

MICO: Yes. If I'm drawn to do so, I upload. I share my feelings with friends. They post comments like 'Okay lang yan,' or 'Everything will be okay.' They give me advice, too. Multiply gives me privileges. I have a Multiply account.

LUCKY: Because I post all my experiences on my site, it's like my friends are experiencing them with me. I upload a lot of photos, too. Our website is downloading so

ANDREA: For me, blogging is a way of organizing your thoughts, and a form of release. I have a private blog account, but I'm going to have a public account, like soon, for those who don't have to read what I think.

MONICA: I blog both when I'm happy and when I'm sad.

What's your most precious gadget?

MONICA: I treasure my camcorder. Unlike the digital ones that only give you still pictures, a camcorder captures movement and emotion.

ANDREA: My cell phone, because that's what I use to communicate with my friends.

LUCKY: I use my PSP a lot.

MICO: I can't live without a cell phone. I lost one recently—it was depressing; I lost all the important numbers.

What is cool to you?

LUCKY: Feng snapping real loose. It feels nice when you're in a room overflowing with people as the. That's not cool.

MONICA: Being cool is relative. That's killing. Opinion is the ideal while it's never cooled. It doesn't mean that's not cool because that's not cool. But I'm not cool at all. I'm not cool in either kind of way. Cool is just being yourself.

What spoils your day?

ANDREA: I hate it whenever I study hard for a school exam, upon finishing it, not perfect.

MICO: Bad rap also when there's traffic. I also hate it when I arrive early for a show but go to the venue late because I couldn't find parking space.

What TV shows do you watch?

MONICA: I watch a lot of news programs. Bad rap also, my parents no dang bad news.

ANDREA: I enjoy watching telenovas and cartoon shows.

LUCKY: Old documentaries.

MICO: I go for sports programs and I like movie channels—HBO, Cinemax, and like Movies.

When you surf the Net, what sites do you visit?

LUCKY: YouTube!

ANDREA: I use my Friendster and Multiply accounts five times a day. I also read lifestyle stories on Yahoo.

MONICA: I always log on to my Multiply account, and now, not for long time.

MICO: Multiply and Friendster. I get musical videos. I read comments of friends.

What's the most inspiring film for you?

LUCKY: "Last Song."

ANDREA: "The Passion of the Christ."

MONICA: "Life is Beautiful."

MICO: "The Pursuit of Happyness."

What's your dream vacation?

LUCKY: I'd like to go to Europe. It's supposedly pero ang mga tao. I have uncles there who tells me interesting stories about Europe.

MICO: I've always dreamed of going to the Holy Land in Jerusalem.

ANDREA: I'd also like to go to Europe. It's not the best place to shop. You go there to experience the scenery, the landmarks.

MONICA: I want to visit Asia. It's culturally rich and colorful.

Have you tried drinking beer or any alcoholic beverage?

MONICA: I don't like beer. My friends and I mix vodka with other stuff, but I tell those who are curious about alcohol to make sure they try it only with family or trusted friends.

ANDREA: Sip lang po. I like Margarita, only because I like salt.

LUCKY: I've not tasted any alcoholic beverage. But I joined a bar-tending contest in high school and won. I smelled the mixtures and had my coach drink them.

MICO: I drink beer occasionally.

E-mail mcruz@inquirer.com.ph

The laugh and times of 2 funny men

TAKE FIVE

An audience with Dolphy and Vic Sotto is a master class in comedy

They never really discuss personal matters, they say; this two-hour exchange is possibly the first time

By Bayani San Diego and the Inquirer Entertainment Staff
Photos by Ryan Lim

KEYLINE/POSING: THEY ACTUALly finished each other's sentences.

During intense entertainment's rare hour-exchange with King of Comedy Dolphy and his son, Everymale Vic Sotto, it became readily apparent, even to a handful of observers present, that these two master comics could've been twins—except that they're separated by almost three decades that witnessed the rise and fall of bodabil, the emergence of indie, then television and, finally, the movies, as a clown's main pulpit.

If you were to chart their life and times, the peaks and valleys are almost identical, too. They've been through similar personal and professional highlights (and low points). The same triumphs and travails.

Quite tellingly Dolphy and Vic achieved career success and became producers at around the same time as well.

Having undergone similar experiences, it's only natural for them to have practically the same views on how—most notably, on the point of saying goodbye.

From all discernible indications, they are living parallel lives. Six months on, that they can anticipate what the other is about to say.

Since they're so "compatible," it may be all the more perplexing why they are co-starring in a movie only now (Tinded Tinded" which opens Aug. 13)—especially by since Vic earlier realized (and appreciated) with Dolphy's pores Penchim and Bayani Casimiro.

But for the two comics, the timing of this comeup is just perfect.

"Sichan. Ki'nelle ning kami," Vic explained.

"Ngayon, nag-a-I love you na kami at ini'ini," Dolphy interjected.

"Meke ma-chorist na morning dobane," Vic quipped.

Another priceless moment occurred when Vic/Dolphy assumed the role of interviewer and asked questions— tough ones that Dolphy/Vic answered candidly . . . and with sharp humor, of course.

Like true gentlemen clowns.

Why do a movie only now?

Vic Sotto: Di ngo 'kin. Di ko nang 'yan. Hindi naboy yung mga nong pilots. Medoka lang ng mgabiz noon sa balibay ng MTRCB! Isad nabay ang isang nanin. Sya na "Home Along da Bilos." Ako na "Okay Ka, Fairy Ko."

Tuwing nagkikita kami: "Hey, gano'n tayo!" Then, a producer wanted to get us. We talked about it, informally again. Ilang taon nga siguro. Tapos me long ang mag-produce. Oh nga!

What do you call Mang Dolphy?

VS: Depende sa mood. Minsan, Pedol. Dolphy. Ayoko namang mawala ang The Dolphy . . . pang-buong-ring 'yon.

Sabat ng mga Asbestosis niya, nakasama namin, ng TVJ (Tito, Vic and Joey). He did a lot of movies with Dencheon ... and Richel.

Eduff?

VS: Bayani Casimiro. Ang nakaraang niya Viduf. Sobrang ng Dolphy

Mang Dolphy, what do you call Vic?

Dolphy: Vic eh.

VS: Minsan Sirit. Sobrang ng Vic.

You like inventing nicknames for friends?

D: Mga nagpasong salita 'yan. Gano'n ang ayt nong ayun. Na ang kay Tang Ilyenph Reinoso, Sobrang ng Pare.

Were you always laughing on the set of your movie?

VS: Act) cross si director Tony Y. Reyes! nakakatawa . . .

D: Pinatong mayat-isang! ...

But you are the two of the most serious men in show biz.

VS: Meke, seslang kumiko. (Laughs) Walang nag-ware.

That's the common impression.

VS: We are serious in doing comedy. That's one thing I learned from Dolphy. Mind-boggling ang comedy. Sinusuyuan. Pinagsisigaba.

Has anyone invited you to give workshops on comedy?

D: Mindi naman necessary kasi, pero pwedeng pag-usapan. Siguro manood ka nang manood ng comedy shows, movies ... talk shows na may komedyan. Ganoon ako noon, kahuseran Elsa Puga at Togo.

VS: Actually 'yon ang pinaka-nagsending training. Live, comedians. Hindi ka na manonood 'yong kapanahunan ng Open House, Clown Time napanood ko na sina Pugo at Togo sa publikado.

D: Nakasama ko din si comedians Japanese time pa. Di pa ito naglo-comedy noon. Pinapanood ko sila sina Ben-and-Benny Sina Bayani at Chi. Sina 'yon. Ang Lucci and Hardy.

Do you feel deprived that you didn't get to train onstage?

VS: Oo. Nakakalungkot si Dolphy. Nandoon ang mga magagaling. Biyen ang sapat ko na dalaw ko sina Dolphy, Babe, Panchito, Bayani.

Dr Nako coem ng ko a Balon sa Orient (Theater) noon.

VS: Si Pugak at Togak nakakasabay din namin.

What's the most important lesson you picked up from Dolphy?

VS: Marami. Bakod sa style ng pagpapatawa, 'yong style din ng pag-react. Ilang pantos I set up, ang sinusuyan, ang comedy, scenes and routines. Kahit anong galing mo maglatin ng punch line pag wala'y nakitira ang mgaye-react ka 'yo, patay-ang-drama.

Dr Ayun nagaling s Panchito.

What was your last meeting with Panchito like?

D: May show kami sa San Diego (California) noon.

VS: Di ba nagsi-shooting pa kayo no'n?

D: Oo. Sa backstage, nako-kuwentuhan niya. Maong maraming ang pangalan niya, nag-sipanoon ang mga tao. Ang isabi ni Panchito, himon ang Bayani (Laughs) Para sabi-sabihin. Bayaan sil kami. Basado 'yong nakwentuhanan niya.

Shorter: ko ayo sa kalagan kong dakon. Ang dangerous! Pahimanik. Hunting pala. Sabi niya 'Sino ano?' Sabi ko: 'Wala. Bagong ibabas na mall (Robinsons?)' Ibig-sabi ng demonsibo eh.

Vic: Tawa na-mera off na kami. Ayoko 'yon.

Di Gabi na pag kaing. Kaya ang kalungan nong ikaninyon, kasi ayaw naghahabol-ka. (Laughs)

What else did you learn from Mang Dolphy?

VS: Humorous ka rin kay Dad, pky 'yong pakikisama at ano.

Weren't you like that before?

VS: Hindi ano kasi! nagpapasama 'yon kanggat't hindi ako nakikita at nong kasalan ni Dolphy. Mahirap ka na nakikipagkuwentuhan dyan kahit kanino.

What do you talk about?

VS: Kung ano-ano. May seryoso. May kalokohan. Bisi nano of the time we talk about his past experiences. I'm really interested in his bodabil days.

You also started in a different field, as a musician?

D: May grupo siya. Singer siya.

V: Folk singer. Medoka ang bobok ni nakasalimuot. Kumakanta ng Jim Croce at Elton John.

D: Damugmon ko sila ng banda niya 'Dyo (Show).

VS: More on music daw. Ang-gang nakasama na namin si Tito-Vi-Joey (De Leon). Ang sparring partner ni Joey noon si Ricky Morales ... banana sa (sitcom) "Bubble and Co."

Does Dolphy answer all your questions?

VS: Lahat sinasagot niya. Chinese eto ito eh!

Even questions about his private life?

D: Hindi kami nag-usap tungkol doon. Parang tapos na lang.

VS: Actually, I don't really ask questions. It's more on nagkwento. Like when he was still starting to show biz ... You should read his book ("Hindi ko ho Nanining Mag-Isa"). Ayun 'yong mga sinila at ilang nakkwento niya sa akin.

Secrets?

Dr Medyo di-secrets 'yon. (Laughs) Hindi madaminlabi pa tayo. Bibitak na ang buhay ng mga tao.

VS: Alangan! Eto na lang pag amalet-kwento-ang-libro ko. Di'ko ibibuka ang sariwid story.

Is there a part of the book that made you say, 'He's a lot like me'?

VS: Mag-kasi lang si Dolphy. Dun-dun-sad only.

D: Medoka kasi ang experiences ko. Sa mga old movies. Isa-isa na lang kinuning nasi'ito. Marami na ang alam!

Mang Dolphy, what did you learn from Vic?

D: Nakita ko lang pamno ang pag-aruo niya at mga method niya sa buhay. Sobrang sabihin ko ang sarili ko at kanya. Minsan eh sya. Pinanood-panood lang sa telebisyon.

VS: Ano nga mailim ko sa mga?

D: Marami ko pang dinaluan ... Ibon dawo-sali'i-mon a time-na dinga ko sila. Kumakain-ko sila.

Kami si [partner] Dawn [Dublin] nanagi na. Maong nagbisnisky kami si Nene (Alma Moreno), kasibat kmam ang si anyo ko'o, dyan-anoe sinabi ako. Ani pa'e, sinabi ako sa amoan.

It was that bad?

D: Di! mga ignorante (sabay tawa) nag-back out. Kaya nagsinga ako sa "Isda sa Harina" noon. Ayoko nang mag-artista. Mag-abroad kami. Almost three years bago ako bumalik.

How old were you then?

D: Mga 40 ako noon. Twenty years na kami sa Zsazsa.

If you were to divide your life into chapters, which decade would be the happiest?

D: Siguro, Mindyo ako ngayon.

How about your 20s?

D: Ay, medkod ako no'n! Ang komplat pa lang ako no'n.

VS: Hindi ko pinanood dancer pag hindi ko mailkot (Laughs)

D: Kapa-dancer ang abaka-ito, Aabangan Nong sinat kasi pag dow drag ... dun ko nakakadiligmaya. Ang saka-abap ko at maalim! Bahgang lasing. Ha-ngat

What was your best dance step?

D: Boogie-woogie.

But boogie-woogie isn't sexy

D: Nong ganga, sexy.

VS: Tap-dance?

D: Alalang-Jon. Hilongalit-ko alalit-pero ang sinipit ng pan'ito.

VS: Sino ang pumasa at Bayani Casimiro.

D: Sa kanya ako natuto. Ayo ang nag-sabon sa akin.

How was your 20s?

VS: Hapon nga dance din ako. (Laughs) Nong 20s ko, medyo magulo, dahil bumatay school at show biz. Meon ako nag-start kolehio si. Pi nong nasa college ako. I played the guitar then.

How about your 30s?

D: Samgagaloka daya. Sidekick pa lang ako noon. Mga bida ako si 'Dick en Jil.' Marami si-silong radio program noon: "Oras ng Colgate," "Johnny Jumbo Jamboree," "Kuhog sa 3Sos." Candidate ang sponsor noon. Siguro, pag pasabay ang sponsor mo, halimaho ka ng-mga-sin. (Laughs)

How was your private life then?

D: Okay naman.

VS: Medkod pa rin.

D: Medoka akong mag-abroad nong 1970s.

VS: Original na OFW 'yan.

D: Ang-thing. Ang si Japan kami si Bayani, six months-six